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Famous Mrs. Fair and other plays

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JAMES FORBES

THE CHORUS LADY

THE SHOW SHOP

THE FAMOUS MRS. FAIR

THE FAMOUS MRS. FAIR
AND OTHER PLAYS

BY

JAMES FORBES

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
WALTER PRICHARD EATON

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THE FAMOUS MRS. FAIR AND OTHER PLAYS
WITH INTRODUCTION BY WALTER PRICHARD EATON
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Copyright, 1906, by James Forbes

THE SHOW SHOP
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO

MY WIFE

AND TO

STEPHEN AND GRACE NOYES WRIGHT

IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION
OF THEIR LOVING ENCOURAGEMENT
AND PITILESS CRITICISM

INTRODUCTION

Why print a play? The three plays by Mr. Forbes, collected in this volume, give, it seems to me, a rather conclusive answer. All three of them have been eminently successful on the stage, for which, of course, they were primarily intended, and upon which they must needs be seen, even by those trained to read play manuscripts, in order fully to catch their flavor or respond to their emotional appeals. Yet when they are read in cold print they are seen to vary greatly in merit, and what in the stage success of each one was dependent upon the extraneous elements of an actor's personality, or the rush of living action that permits the spectator no time for pause and reflection, or the passions and idiosyncrasies of the day, becomes suddenly clear. There is no magic in print. The dramatist who writes, indeed, for the page rather than the stage, aspiring to be "literary," is merely courting a very proper disaster. Yet the dramatist whose plot and personages—their speech, their motives, the lesson of their lives—will not stand the calmer and lingering scrutiny of the reflective reader, is only a hack writer, after all. In the high sense, a drama is "literature" not because it can be read with pleasure, but merely because it can endure close and reflective scrutiny. From the failure of our theatre to keep its successful plays in a repertoire, there is no other recourse to the dramatist who challenges such scrutiny—a praiseworthy challenge, surely—but to print his plays. That is why the number of printed plays is a fair indication of the serious ambition of our dramatists.

Of the three plays offered here, "The Chorus Lady," no reader will need to be told, can least endure the scrutiny print affords. Yet it was enormously successful in our

theatre, how successful readers who did not see the original production in 1906 may be at some loss to guess. The title part was played by Miss Rose Stahl, an actress who brought to its impersonation so breezy and crudely wholesome and dynamic a personality, tossing off its slang with such unstudied and spontaneous zest, that she took the public captive. The play, to be sure, had its origin in a magazine sketch by Mr. Forbes, and this sketch was expanded into a play upon a hint given to him by some picture he saw—the picture of a chorus girl interrupted at a supper by the arrival of her obviously rural father and mother. It was not, then, "tailored" to Miss Stahl's order. But it certainly fitted her as no later play she acted ever did, and the reader of today, noting the crudities or triteness of plot, the melodramatic villain, the poverty and conventionality of essential characterization, may well be excused for classing it as a successful example of that type of play called "character comedy," which is to say, a play in which some one or more vivid and entertaining persons are allowed the run of the stage, making the most of their eccentricities and thus always conditioning the story to immediate theatrical demands. It is a type of play flourishing essentially in the theatre, and seldom enough able to stand up under a reader's scrutiny. The stage version of "Rip Van Winkle," so marvelously acted by Jefferson, is a poor, shabby thing in print. In spite of Mr. Forbes' assertion that he always works from character, not from plot or situation, in writing a play, evolving his story from the sort of people he is presenting, one can hardly escape the conviction that Patricia O'Brien, at least, became known to his imagination with her makeup on—he saw her as an amusing stage figure—and rather found a story to show her off than tracked down her actual life.

"The Show Shop" is stuff of a different metal. The present writer thought, when he saw this play first acted, that it was a good-natured satire of American stage life, as deftly, as truthfully and as humanly done as anything of a similar nature in the Continental theatres. A present reading of the

manucript does not seem to him to call for revision of this judgment. Mr. Forbes says that the germ of the comedy was a desire to put the "stage mother" into a play. This desire he has certainly realized; Mrs. Dean, even in print, is a formidable object! But how neatly each one of his characters is sketched, how diversified they are, how human, from the little Hebrew manager who doesn't believe he knows how to pick a failure, to the gloomy and unimportant author who haunts the flies as his manuscript is slaughtered to make an ingenue's holiday. It may well be that the average audience is not sufficiently sophisticated to appreciate in full either the truthful character pictures or the satire of "The Show Shop"; but that is nothing against its technical merits. It remains the most pungent, amusing, and yet the most kindly satire of stage life and the shams of theatrical production, yet written by an American. There can be no question in the reader's mind whether this play was tailored for an actor or actress. It was quite obviously written out of a first hand acquaintance with the characters, who conditioned the story quite according to their weaknesses and amiable failings, as the author felt them. Accordingly, it stands up four square under the test of print.

Mr. Forbes says that after he has become acquainted with his characters, knows all about them and their antecedents, and has found out what their story is, he is extremely unhappy and dissatisfied if he cannot put that story into a sentence. The preliminary sentence which summed up, for him, "The Famous Mrs. Fair" was, he says, something as follows:—"A woman actuated by duty engages in war work, winning honors and the loving admiration and encouragement of her family; but when on her return she, actuated by selfish vanity, again leaves them, the realization is brought home to her tragically that a wife and mother can have a career but not at the expense of her obligations to her home and family."

That sentence, it seems to me, clears away a good deal of the dispute which has gone on regarding this latest and most

serious of Mr. Forbes' plays. Written immediately after the World War, it was quite natural that the author chose war work as the unselfish career his heroine had been following without disaster to her home, but war work was not essential to his story; it might have been something quite different. The whole point was that during Mrs. Fair's first absence from home she left behind a sustaining devotion, and during her second absence this sustaining devotion was quite naturally absent. The author did not argue that a married woman cannot have a "career" (indeed, he showed the son's wife to be quite successfully holding down her job), meanwhile contradicting himself by stating that his heroine had already followed a career for four years. Critics of the play have assumed a contradiction that does not exist—possibly because Mr. Forbes has, in reality, not argued at all, but merely told his story and left all to inference; not always a safe proceeding in this world so dependent on sign boards. It does not appear from a reading of the play that Mrs. Fair was anything more than an ordinarily capable woman, as her family were certainly nothing more than ordinary folk. Under the impetus of the war, Mrs. Fair became a hero—war makes many heroes out of ordinary material—and her family, in one way or another, were moved by exactly the same impetus to transcend the normal. The play began with the coming back to normal, the very commonplace normal of the Fair family. The real trouble seemed to be that Mrs. Fair never knew she was commonplace. The woman who, under normal conditions, can look after a "career" and a family at the same time, doing justice to both, is exceptional; she cannot be commonplace, for she has got to furnish to her flock the same sustaining stimulus that war had previously furnished to the Fairs. One rather suspects that Mrs. Fair's daughter-in-law had capacities in that direction, for she possessed the hard common sense and direct vision which come from contact with realities, a privilege denied to the wealthy. Certainly there is no evidence in this play that Mr. Forbes believes it cannot be

done, that he is an anti-feminist. All he says is, that Mrs. Fair, under normal conditions, was too shallow and vain a woman to do it, and by a set of almost tragic circumstances he brought the lesson home to her and put her on the possible road to finding an ultimate solution. Why, then, should many spectators have felt his play did not hold together? Perhaps the trouble is that we have been so accustomed of late to direct preachment in our serious drama that we are a bit bewildered when the preaching is done by the more artistic method of a story without footnotes.

At any rate, such controversies as have followed the production of "The Famous Mrs. Fair" were quite impossible over "The Chorus Lady." In the thirteen years which elapsed between the composition of those two plays, it is quite evident that Mr. Forbes considerably deepened his conception of what he means by "character," moving from the superficial to the fundamental, from externals to internals, from mannerisms to manners. He has thus moved from a play which suffers severely under the test of print to one which can meet the test with the assurance born of a reasoned reflection on life and human motives. One wishes that from this individual case, he could draw an analogy taking in the whole field of American drama; that he could say it is with all our playwrights as it is with Mr. Forbes. But such a statement, alas! would be the measure of hope rather than judgment.

WALTER PRICHARD EATON.

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THE CHORUS LADY

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

PATRICIA O'BRIEN
NORA O'BRIEN
MRS. O'BRIEN
PATRICK O'BRIEN
DAN MALLORY
DICK CRAWFORD
SYLVIA SIMPSON
GEORGIE ADAMS COOTE
MILLY SULTZER
INEZ BLAIR
EVELYN LARUE
LOU ARCHER
RITA NICHOLS
MAI DELANEY
ROGERS
THE DUKE
JAKEY
SHRIMP
A CALL BOY
A LAUNDRYMAN

The Scenes of the First Act are laid in the home of the trainer at the MALLORY RACING STABLES, on Long Island, in the month of November; those of the succeeding acts occur in New York City between the hours of 7:45 and midnight of an evening in the following April, beginning in a dressing room of the Longacre Theatre, continuing in the apartment of RICHARD CRAWFORD, and concluding in the Harlem flat occupied by PATRICIA and NORA O'BRIEN.

THE CHORUS LADY

Original cast, as first presented at the Savoy Theatre, New York, September 1st, 1906.

It is arranged in the order in which the characters first speak.

Mrs. O'Brien	*Alice Leigh*
Nora O'Brien	*Eva Dennison*
Shrimp	*George Colton*
The Duke	*Thomas Maguire*
Jakey	*Frank Fay*
Patrick O'Brien	*Giles Shine*
Dick Crawford	*Frank Byrne*
Patricia O'Brien	*ROSE STAHL*
Dan Mallory	*Wilfred Lucas*
Milly Sultzer	*Amy Lesser*
Inez Blair	*Claire Lane*
Evelyn LaRue	*Helen Hilton*
Rita Nichols	*Annie Ives*
Lou Archer	*Margaret Wheeler*
Mai Delaney	*Carolyn Green*
Georgie Adams Coote	*Amy Lee*
A Call Boy	*Thomas Maguire*
Sylvia Simpson	*Maude Knowlton*
A Laundryman	*George Colton*
Rogers	*Thomas Lawrence*

THE CHORUS LADY

THE FIRST ACT

The kitchen in the home of PATRICK O'BRIEN, *the trainer of the Mallory Racing Stables. It is a low ceilinged room with a long recessed window at the back through which can be seen a bleak, November landscape. In an angle at the right of the room is a large chimney, its huge old-time fireplace filled now with a kitchen range, in which a fire is lighted. Beside the fireplace is a door opening into a hall in which are the stairs. Across the hall is the parlor. There is another door in the rear wall to the right of the window. It opens on to a porch. On the left wall is a dresser for china and a kitchen sink. Above the sink hangs a small mirror, a towel rack and a dishpan. In the centre of the room is a large table. There are a half dozen kitchen chairs with rush seats, an armchair and a rocking chair. The room serves as kitchen, dining-room and living-room, and with its freshly starched white window curtains, its shining pots and pans is the "pink" of neatness.*

SHRIMP, JAKEY, THE DUKE, *stable-boys and* MRS. O'BRIEN, *the wife of the trainer, are seated at breakfast.* SHRIMP *and* JAKEY *are products of New York's East Side;* THE DUKE *is a cockney importation, an ex-jockey.* MRS. O'BRIEN *is a stout motherly soul in the fifties clad in a maroon-coloured merino dress over which is a large kitchen apron. The boys are gobbling their food,* MRS. O'BRIEN *heaping their plates with hash.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Calling.*] Nora—No—ra—Nora, are yees asleep?

NORA. [*Outside.*] Ye-es.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Then stir yourself.

NORA [*Outside.*] Yes, yes, I'm coming.

[NORA, MRS. O'BRIEN'S *daughter, a very pretty girl of eighteen, comes in sulkily.*

NORA. [*Peevishly.*] A person can't get time to dress in this house.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Dress, is it? It's primpin' ye were, and for a lot o' stable boys.

NORA. Stable boys! The idea! Dirty little brats!

MRS. O'BRIEN. The airs of her! Look to the boys, now, while I go skim a pan of milk.

[*She takes a pitcher from the table and goes outside.* NORA *gets the coffee pot from the stove and pours herself a cup of coffee.*

NORA. Shrimp, who won this morning?

SHRIMP. Ginger, wid de Duke up.

NORA. Who was on Lady Belle?

SHRIMP. Me. Wuz you in wrong?

NORA. You've lost me five dollars to the Duke and I'll never speak to you again.

SHRIMP. At dat if she hadn't been forced to de deep goin' on de rail I'd a bodered de Duke a few.

THE DUKE. You'd bothered me a few. You'd bally well have to know 'ow to sit a mount, old top, afore you can bother the Duke.

SHRIMP. Ah you! [*To* NORA.] And Jakey tangled me at de start.

JAKEY. Tangled nuttin'. Don't go tryin' to queer me cuz you's an onion.

NORA. [*To* SHRIMP.] You nearly made a nice mess of things. For two pins I'd shake you good.

THE DUKE. [*Rising.*] Let me 'ave the pleasure.

SHRIMP. Just try it once.

THE DUKE. You ain't fit to 'andle. [*Going to* NORA.]

I say you know I don't want to be too pressin', but I needs the coin.

NORA. You'll have to wait a while.

THE DUKE. See 'ere, are you welchin'?

NORA. Haven't I always paid you?

THE DUKE. Can't you get it from Pat?

NORA. I promised her the last time I wouldn't ever bet again.

THE DUKE. I say, think I'm going to get out there an' ride like 'ell for nothing?

SHRIMP. See here, "old top," that's no way to talk to a goil.

JAKEY. Give him de rinky dink, Nora.

[THE DUKE *folds his fist and looks threateningly at* SHRIMP, *who glares at him.*

THE DUKE. I'll tell your father meself.

NORA. Go on, tell him.

[*She bursts into tears.* SHRIMP *rises and goes to* THE DUKE.

SHRIMP. Say kid, stop abusin' de loidy.

[THE DUKE *makes a pass at* SHRIMP *who returns it.* JAKEY *rises to watch the fight which is interrupted by the return of* MRS. O'BRIEN *carrying the pitcher of milk.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Stop your scrappin', or you'll regret it fer it's no breakfast you'll get.

[*The boys scurry to their places.* NORA *and* MRS. O'BRIEN *sit at opposite ends of the table. All resume their breakfast.*

SHRIMP. Look at de Duke, eatin' wid a fork. Trowin' on a lot of lugs cuz he wins five dollars.

MRS. O'BRIEN. What's that? Who won five dollars?

JAKEY. De Duke.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Who off a?

[*There is a pause and the boys look covertly at* NORA. MRS. O'BRIEN, *who is filling the glasses with milk, stops. She looks at the boys, then at* NORA.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Nora, have you been bettin' again?

NORA. [*Innocently.*] Me? I'd like to know where I'd get five dollars.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Well, I'm thankful. I don't want another row on me hands, an' you know well what happened last time your father caught ye gamblin' on the trials.

NORA. Shrimp, who was that man at the stables, with Mr. Mallory, this morning?

SHRIMP. De one dat was watchin' de trials?

NORA. Yes.

SHRIMP. Soich me.

NORA. [*Coquettishly.*] What like a looking man was he? Handsome?

THE DUKE. Fair lookin', if you likes 'em big an' mushy. [*Rising and striking an attitude.*] Most wimmen I've knowed preferred 'em small an' jaunty.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Ye'd better keep them complimentary remarks to yerself. He's your new boss.

NORA. Is that Mr. Crawford?

MRS. O'BRIEN. None else.

THE DUKE. 'Oo's 'e?

MRS. O'BRIEN. He's Mr. Mallory's new partner, an' see you don't be makin' O'Brien blush fer yees.

[*The outside door opens to admit* PATRICK O'BRIEN. *He is in the sixties, spare of figure, with a kindly humorous face. He is in corduroys. Before going to the table he hangs up his cap.*

O'BRIEN. Still at it, are ye? It's lucky I'm here, or it's no breakfast I'd be havin'.

THE DUKE. The 'ash is uncommon fine, sir. Could I trouble you, Mrs. O'Brien?

[*He holds out his plate.* O'BRIEN *takes it from him and lays it on the table.*

O'BRIEN. You've had enough. Off with the lot of ye.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Oh, Patrick, lave the poor darlin's have their fill!

O'BRIEN. All right. Oh, mother, Danny and Mr. Craw-

ford's goin' to stop on their way back from the stables for a cup of your coffee.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Indignantly.*] It's a wonder you wouldn't say so. Skedaddle, the lot of ye. Do you want to be eatin' all day?

[*The boys grab their caps and run out.* NORA, *unobserved, darts into the hall and runs upstairs.* MRS. O'BRIEN *bustling about placing chairs against the wall approaches* O'BRIEN, *who has just sat down to eat his breakfast.*

O'BRIEN. Oh, wife——

MRS. O'BRIEN. Don't be talkin', Patrick. Take your plate in your lap. [O'BRIEN *does so meekly.*] It's a fresh place I must be layin' for Mr. Crawford. [*Calling.*] Nora, No-ra. She's primpin' agen.

[*She gets the coffee mill.*

O'BRIEN. Lave her be. Don't be naggin' her.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Coming to him.*] When I need your advice about me own child I'll ask for it. Give this a twist while yer idlin'.

[*She hands him the coffee mill.* O'BRIEN *is indignant. He has not had a chance to have a mouthful of food.*

O'BRIEN. Where's Nora? [*Calling.*] Nora—come here an' help your mother.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Lave the child alone. It's the queer girl she'd be, if she didn't want to spruce up a bit when a strange young man comes callin'.

[NORA *comes in.*

NORA. [*Peevishly.*] Well, what do you want now?

[O'BRIEN *offers the mill to* NORA.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Grind that coffee yourself, Patrick. [*To* NORA.] I want you to lay a fresh place for Mr. Crawford.

[NORA *and* MRS. O'BRIEN *begin to remove the breakfast dishes.* O'BRIEN *sits grinding the coffee.*

NORA. [*Sulkily.*] More work.

MRS. O'BRIEN. "More work!" An' why not? You're

a workin' man's daughter. Don't I work? Don't your sister work? Poor girl!

NORA. Poor girl! I'd like to trade places with her.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Oh, you would, would you? An' who's goin' to give you a job on the stage? Sure, you can't sing nor dance like Patricia? You're the spit of your father. [*Proudly.*] It's me Pat takes after.

NORA. I'm lots prettier than she is.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Mockingly.*] You an' your father settin' up to be the beauties of the family.

NORA. Pat says if she had my face she'd have every soubrette on Broadway beat a mile. I don't think it's fair to expect me to spend my life waiting hand and foot on a lot of stable boys, an' Pat having all the clothes she wants and off enjoying herself.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Ain't she always sendin' you things?

NORA. [*Scornfully.*] Cast-offs!

MRS. O'BRIEN. You ungrateful girl. An' do you call gallivantin' all over the country with the "Moonlight Maids" enjoyment?

NORA. I'd like to try it for a change. An' if I have to earn my living——

MRS. O'BRIEN. What talk have ye? What's this about earnin' a livin'?

[*She looks with suspicion at* O'BRIEN, *who is confused.*

NORA. Daddy said I'd soon have need to be thinking of it.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Oh, he did, did he? Let him pay attention to his horses, I'll run me children. Nora, get the butter. [NORA *goes.*] It's you that spoilin' her, puttin' this nonsense in her head about goin' on the stage.

[*She jerks the coffee mill out of his hand.*

O'BRIEN. [*Rising.*] Oh, the idea's not a bad on. It's good money Pat's earnin'.

MRS. O'BRIEN. I misdoubt Nora's knowin' how.

O'BRIEN. What talk have you? Sure, actin's no trick at all. I've seen babies do it.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Sitting.*] Sure it's glib ye are to have them leave me. [*Crying.*] No one thinks of a mother's heart. Me baby's goin' away from me.

O'BRIEN. [*Going to her.*] Whist, woman, whist, she ain't gone yet!

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Wailing.*] But she will.

O'BRIEN. [*Annoyed.*] Whist! Sure, Mr. Crawford'll be here any minute. I don't want him to think I've been abusin' ye.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Curiosity getting the better of grief.*] What sort is this Crawford?

O'BRIEN. I've took a dislike to him.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Then God preserve us all. Ye'll glory in showin' it.

O'BRIEN. I'm learnin' diplomacy.

MRS. O'BRIEN. It's high time. Use a bit of it now and then. Was it you invited him over?

MR. O'BRIEN. It was not. He's comin' for a cup of coffee to take the chill off.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Proudly.*] I suppose you was braggin' about me coffee.

O'BRIEN. I was not.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Angrily.*] An' why not? You might know you'd never say a good word for a body.

O'BRIEN. It was Mallory.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Smiling.*] My boy, Dan, bless his heart. [*Steps are heard outside.*] That's Crawford. Now smile, though you could choke him.

[DICK CRAWFORD *appears at the door. He is a handsome man of thirty-five, and has great charm of manner, but is rather a "bounder" and somewhat "sporty" in attire.* O'BRIEN *greets him.*

O'BRIEN. Come right in, sir, an' welcome. Wife, this is Mr. Crawford.

MRS. O'BRIEN. 'Tis an honour to know you. Where's Danny boy?

O'BRIEN. She means Mallory. 'Tis foolish she is about

him. [NORA *enters.*] Mr. Crawford, this is my daughter.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Smiling.*] She's the baby.

NORA. [*Embarrassed.*] Oh, mother. [*To* CRAWFORD.] Where is Dan?

CRAWFORD. He was detained at the stable.

O'BRIEN. Nora, take Mr. Crawford's coat. [NORA *hangs it up.*] Draw up your chair, Mr. Crawford. Wife, pour the coffee.

CRAWFORD. I'm afraid you've been put to a lot of trouble, Mrs. O'Brien.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Sure, I like to fuss for any man that appreciates it.

[*She looks meaningly at* O'BRIEN, *who smiles sarcastically at her.*

CRAWFORD. Mallory will be right along.

[*He politely passes the cup* MRS. O'BRIEN *has filled to* O'BRIEN *who is seated at the table.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Keep that. O'Brien's had his breakfast.

CRAWFORD. Oh, you've breakfasted, O'Brien?

O'BRIEN. So *she* says.

CRAWFORD. [*Politely.*] Is this all of your family, Mrs. O'Brien?

NORA. Oh, no, there's Pat.

CRAWFORD. Oh, a son.

MRS. O'BRIEN. No, it's her sister Patricia. Nora, run an' get her photograph for the gentleman. Get the one in costume.

NORA. [*Going to the door to the hall.*] Where is it?

MRS. O'BRIEN. It's in the lower drawer. Lift up the waist of my black silk. It's wrapped in the Paisley shawl.

O'BRIEN. And, Nora, look in me hat box, you'll find a couple.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Father, the man'll think you're daft. Sure, one's enough.

CRAWFORD. Not at all. I'm very much interested.

MRS. O'BRIEN. All right, Nora. [NORA *goes.*] Pat-

rick, you may as well step into the parlour and bring the crayon enlargement.

[O'BRIEN, *delighted, follows* NORA.

CRAWFORD. Pat is rather an odd name for a girl.

MRS. O'BRIEN. She's named for Patrick.

CRAWFORD. Oh, I see, a sort of a substitute for a son?

MRS. O'BRIEN. A substitute, is it? Sure, I wouldn't take a half a dozen of the lovin' sons me friends has for the likes of Pat.

[NORA *enters, with the photographs wrapped in tissue paper. She gives them to* MRS. O'BRIEN. O'BRIEN *follows with the crayon enlargement, which he displays proudly in all lights and positions. It is a fearful affair.* CRAWFORD *looks at it, starts to laugh. They look at him. He coughs.*

CRAWFORD. [*Quickly.*] She must be a very pretty girl.

O'BRIEN. [*Proudly.*] I've seen homelier.

[*He moves the picture into what he thinks is a better position.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Don't be squidgin' it an' bobbin' it. You fair dazzle one. [*Critically.*] It's a rale deceivin' thing. When she's away from me I think it's the livin' image of her, but when she's alongside, I——

CRAWFORD. It's the difference in the colouring.

NORA. Pat says it gives her the "Willies."

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Proudly.*] It's real plush on the frame. [O'BRIEN *smooths it.*] Don't be rumplin' it. You'd better put it down before you break the glass.

[*He puts it down.* CRAWFORD *looks at the photographs which* MRS. O'BRIEN *has given him.*

CRAWFORD. Oh, taken in fancy costume.

MRS. O'BRIEN. No, them's her workin' clothes.

[CRAWFORD *looks at* O'BRIEN *inquiringly.*

NORA. Pat's on the stage.

CRAWFORD. Oh, an actress.

O'BRIEN. [*Very proudly.*] Oh, not at all. She's a Queen of Burlesque.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Impressively.*] With the "Moonlight Maids."

NORA. Perhaps you've heard of them?

CRAWFORD. [*Lying.*] Oh, yes, yes, a very fine company, lots of clever people.

O'BRIEN. They pays Pat twenty a week.

MRS. O'BRIEN. *An'* her costumes.

CRAWFORD. [*Examining the photographs.*] Oh, *they* won't amount to much.

[*The* O'BRIEN *family puzzled, look at one another.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. I've seen few grand ladies with finer silks on their backs.

O'BRIEN. Sure the stockings are all silk and that long.

[*He indicates their length.* MRS. O'BRIEN, *shocked, reproves him.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Patrick! take the crayon into the parlour. Put it back on the aisel, an' be sure you put the cloth over it.

[O'BRIEN *goes, carrying the picture carefully.* JAKEY *rushes in with a telegram.*

JAKEY. A telegram for Mrs. O'Brien.

[*He gives it to* MRS. O'BRIEN *and goes.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. A telegram. [*She holds it in her hand, looks at it, turns it over, then without opening it, clasps it to her breast and begins to wail.*] She's killed! She's killed! Oh, the black day I let me Pat go trapsin' all over the country.

O'BRIEN. [*Running in excitedly.*] What ails ye?

MRS. O'BRIEN. I have a telegram, a telegram. She's killed! She's killed!

CRAWFORD. Wouldn't it be as well to open it?

O'BRIEN. [*Grabbing it.*] Woman, give it to me.

[*He opens it.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Grabbing it.*] How dare ye be openin' a telegram addressed to me?

NORA. Oh! Is she alive?

MRS. O'BRIEN. Praise be. She is. It's signed "Pat."

NORA. What does she say?

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Reading.*] "Show's on the pazaz, comin' on the 7:06. Me for home and mother. Pat." [*Turning upon* O'BRIEN.] Wake up, Patrick O'Brien. Half past seven an' your poor child waitin' in a cold daypo, an' you standin' there like the ninny ye are.

O'BRIEN. [*Wildly excited.*] Nora, where's me overcoat? Wife, where's me hat? You'll excuse me, sir, I must go hitch up.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Hold your horses. You'll go ask Danny to meet her. It's dyin' glad o' the chance he'll be. I've use for you here.

O'BRIEN. [*Indignantly.*] And what'll Nora be doin'?

MRS. O'BRIEN. Nora'll be entertainin' Mr. Crawford.

[*She rises.*

CRAWFORD. Oh, you mustn't let me interfere.

[*He rises.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. It's a man's work.

O'BRIEN. [*Very sulkily.*] What work?

MRS. O'BRIEN. If you must compel me to reveal the secrets of the home, the spare room bed's to be put up.

O'BRIEN. I'll go tell Mallory.

NORA. Tell him to hurry here.

MRS. O'BRIEN. He'll do that, never fear. Tell him to hurry back.

[O'BRIEN *gets his cap and goes.*

CRAWFORD. I fear I am in the way.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Not at all, Mr. Crawford. Stop an' have a bit chat with Nora. She'll have the chance to say a word for herself now her mother's lavin' the room.

[*She goes.* NORA *begins to "clear" the table.*

CRAWFORD. So it's your sister and Mallory, eh? I must congratulate him.

NORA. Isn't Dan nice? He'll make such a good husband, and Mom says, good husbands are awful scarce.

CRAWFORD. I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you.

NORA. I'm not. I'm goin' on the stage.

CRAWFORD. [*Satirically.*] It's not a bad place to get husbands these days.

NORA. I'm not going on the stage to get married.

CRAWFORD. [*Amused.*] Oh, I see, for fame.

NORA. No, indeed. For twenty dollars a week. Just think of all the pretty clothes you could buy for that.

CRAWFORD. Can you? I wish I had known it.

NORA. Pat says I ought to stay at home, that I don't know when I'm well off.

CRAWFORD. I fear that I agree with Pat.

[NORA *begins to fold the tablecloth.* CRAWFORD *goes to her to help her.*

NORA. That's all very well, but how'd you like to wear your sister's old dresses?

CRAWFORD. I don't think I would like it.

NORA. There, you see, Pat or no Pat, I'm going to New York.

CRAWFORD. You might not like it.

NORA. Not like New York! The idea! Why even Pat, who *loves* the country, says New York's the one best bet.

CRAWFORD. It's a pretty good little town. [*Meaningly.*] Yet I haven't enjoyed myself so much in a long while as I did this morning.

[*He advances with the cloth and as he hands it to* NORA, *takes her hands in his.* NORA, *embarrassed, shyly moves away from him.*

NORA. Did you see all the horses? Which one did you like most?

CRAWFORD. They're a fine string. Still, I think Lady Belle took my eye.

NORA. Isn't she a little beauty? I love her, but she doesn't get any sugar from *me* this morning.

CRAWFORD. No? Why not?

NORA. Because she lost me five dollars to the Duke.

CRAWFORD. Oh, the little English boy! Do you bet?

NORA. [*Impulsively.*] I love to. But I shouldn't have told you that.

CRAWFORD. Why not?

NORA. It might hurt father in your eyes.

CRAWFORD. How?

NORA. He thinks it dishonourable for any of us, he being a trainer, to put money on a horse. I don't know what he'd do if he found out I'd disobeyed him again.

CRAWFORD. I won't tell him.

NORA. But the Duke will, if I don't pay him. I don't know what I'm going to do.

CRAWFORD. Let me lend it to you?

NORA. Oh, Mr. Crawford. I wasn't hinting. I couldn't think of taking money from you. What would father say if he found out?

CRAWFORD. He needn't know.

NORA. [*Hesitatingly.*] You're a stranger.

CRAWFORD. Surely, as I am to be Mallory's partner, I am also going to be a friend of the family.

NORA. Yes, of course, I suppose so. You aren't quite a stranger. I hate to tell father or Pat. You're sure it would be all right for a girl to borrow money from a gentleman?

CRAWFORD. Certainly.

NORA. Of course I would pay you back.

CRAWFORD. Don't let that worry you.

[*He takes a roll of bills from his pocket.* MRS. O'BRIEN'S *voice is heard outside.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Nora!

NORA. Oh, don't let her see.

[MRS. O'BRIEN *enters.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. You'll have to dust the parlour. Oh, Mr. Crawford, I thought——

CRAWFORD. [*Putting the money in his pocket.*] You thought I was gone. I'm just going.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Sure, I'm not meanin' to drive you away. You'll come back later. It's proud I'd be to introduce you to Pat.

CRAWFORD. I shall be delighted to come back. Good-bye for the present.

[*He smiles at* NORA *as he goes.* NORA *gets the duster and starts to leave the room.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Eagerly.*] What was he sayin' to you?

NORA. Oh, nothing much.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Sure, he was a long time sayin' it. What were you talkin' about?

NORA. Pat and the horses.

MRS. O'BRIEN. What about them?

NORA. [*Impatiently.*] Oh, nothing much.

[*She goes.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Annoyed.*] Nora, it's maddenin' ye are. Here I am starvin' for a bit of news and the *best I get* is "nothin' much."

[*Grumbling, she follows* NORA *into the hall, closing the door. There is a slight pause, then a voice is heard outside calling "Oohoo." In a moment it is repeated and a figure is seen to pass the window. The door is thrown open and* PATRICIA O'BRIEN *enters. She is vivid, magnetic and, unmistakably, the "seasoned" chorus girl. Perched on an elaborate coiffure of bleached blonde hair is a large picture hat. She wears a short, tightly-fitting coat of tan cloth and a trailing skirt of black satin. Around her throat and tied in a flaring bow is a scarf of pink tulle. She carries a dress suit case and an umbrella. She looks about the empty room and her expression of happy anticipation gives place to one of disappointed annoyance.*

PAT. Well, wouldn't this frost you? Me havin' to beat it all the way from the daypo' an' then not a soul to hand me the welcome mit. I usta think I was the big screech in this family but looks like I'm the false alarm. [*She goes to the door at the left and throws it open.*] Mom!

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Upstairs.*] Nora, 'tis Pat, 'tis Pat. Hurry, Nora.

PAT. [*Witheringly.*] Don't hurry on my account.

[*She assumes a manner of spurious elegance and moves*

away with a "stagey" air of tragic dignity, as MRS. O'BRIEN *enters.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Oh, Pat, me darlin', me darlin'.

[*She throws her arms around* PAT, *who submits to the embrace.*

NORA. [*Running in.*] Pat, dear, I'm so glad.

[*She kisses her.*

PAT. [*Half crying.*] Someone might 'a' met me.

NORA. Wasn't there anyone at the train?

MRS. O'BRIEN. Where was Danny?

PAT. Don't speak his name. Didn't you get my wire sayin' as I'd be here on the seven six?

NORA. Yes, but it wasn't delivered until half-past seven this morning.

PAT. Half-past seven? Wouldn't that scald you?

MRS. O'BRIEN. An' Danny rushed right away for the train. He musta missed you.

PAT. Looks that way. [*Smiling.*] I'm sorry I was so grouchy, but I'm so temperamental.

[*She removes her hat and coat.* NORA *takes them.* MRS. O'BRIEN *goes to her.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. There, there, Pat. I don't blame ye. Sure, 'twas a cold welcome ye had from yer loved ones!

[PAT *smiles and kisses her.*

PAT. I had it all framed up. Me descendin' from the caboose an' fallin' on everybody's neck, an' wen I got off the train the only neck in sight belongs to that village cut-up as propels the hack.

MRS. O'BRIEN. 'Twas a black shame.

PAT. Wait! The worst is yet to come. I'd been handin' it out all season to that bunch of frails in the company about my financé as owned a racin' stable an' 'at I wired him to meet me. An' wen that rabbit-faced hackman comes up and hands out his mit to me—well, never to my dyin' day will I forget the way that bunch of burlesquers hands me the merry "ha, ha!"

MRS. O'BRIEN. Ye poor lamb!

[*She sits.*

PAT. Where's Pop?

MRS. O'BRIEN. Nora, go find your father.

[NORA *goes.* PAT *comes down to her mother and putting her arms around her, kisses her.*

PAT. Gee, it's good to get home again.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Patsy, dear, it's your mother that misses you sorely.

PAT. [*Imitating her mother's brogue.*] Sure, I'll soon be Mrs. Mallory an' won't be lavin' you at all, at all.

MRS. O'BRIEN. You'll be havin' to wait a while.

PAT. Wait a while?

MRS. O'BRIEN. Hasn't Danny told you?

PAT. Told what?

MRS. O'BRIEN. He's had to take a partner.

PAT. I knew he got bumped bad at Sheepshead, but he never told me nothin' about a partner. Who is he?

MRS. O'BRIEN. Mr. Crawford. Your father says Danny'll get little out of the stable but his board and keep.

PAT. Ain't that punk luck?

[NORA *runs on, followed by* O'BRIEN.

O'BRIEN. Hello, Pat.

PAT. [*Rushing to him.*] Hello, Pop. [*She throws her arms around him, then holds him away from her, looking at him.*] Say, Mom, he's gettin' fat.

O'BRIEN. You're lookin' fine, girl.

PAT. I feel immense.

[*She sits. The others cluster around her to hear the news.*

O'BRIEN. What happened to your show?

PAT. The financial party as was back a the "Moonlight Maids" got chilblains.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Poor creature, where did he catch them?

PAT. In the box-office.

O'BRIEN. [*Laughing.*] She had you there, mother.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Wasn't the play comical?

PAT. I never noticed anyone laff themselves to death. The comedians was a couple of morgues. The best joke in the show was the star, one of them hand-made blondes. She was in the original "Black Crook" company an' she had a daughter at school *then*. I called the toin on the show at rehoisal, but the manager was one a them bull-headed guys that knowed it all.

NORA. Was that all there was in the company?

PAT. No, there was a couple o' song-and-dance kikes, a team a acrobats, a troupe a moth-eaten dogs, an' a chorus that looked like the Chamber-maids' Union.

NORA. Wasn't the scenery nice?

PAT. [*Patronisingly.*] Yes, the scenery *was* nice, an' I made a great personal success. I had three lines in the after piece.

O'BRIEN. What are you goin' to do?

PAT. I gotta get back to New York tomorrow.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Oh! Pat, lavin' me so soon? Can't you stop a bit?

PAT. Mom, I can't keep men like Henry W. Savage an' Klaw & Erlanger waitin' to know what I'm goin' to do.

NORA. Will you play a part in the play?

PAT. That depends on the part. Like as not I'll just go back in the chorus. What's the use a bein' ambitious? Only makes you uncomfortable in your mind. I've thought some a going into vodeville. I've a friend that's close to B. F. Keith's stenographer, an' he thought he could book me some dates. Maybe I'll frame up a sister act.

NORA. [*Delighted.*] Oh, Pat, a sister act. You're going to take me?

PAT. Why, honey lamb, you couldn't do a toin in vodeville. The stage is no place for you.

NORA. [*Furiously.*] You needn't think you're the only person in this family that can do anything. I'll just show you. You're jealous because I'm better looking than you

are. I'll go in the chorus, too, just to spite you, you see if I don't.

[*She runs out of the room, raging.*

PAT. [*Rising.*] Why, Nora! Honey lamb! [*She turns to her mother.*] Mom, you haven't been encouraging her? Pop, you won't let her go?

[O'BRIEN *and* MRS. O'BRIEN *exchange guilty looks.*

O'BRIEN. She's got to be thinkin' of earnin' her livin'.

PAT. [*Firmly.*] Nix for the stage, Pop. She ain't wise to takin' care of herself.

MRS. O'BRIEN. What d'ye mean, Pat?

PAT. I mean I don't want my little sister in the chorus.

O'BRIEN. If it ain't fit for Nora, it ain't fit for you, an' it's here you'll stay.

PAT. [*To* O'BRIEN.] The chorus is all right, all right. It's like everythin' else: it depends on the kind of person that goes in it. [*To* MRS. O'BRIEN.] An' she's so sweet! It seems a shame she can't stay home till she marries some nice fella.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Sure you done well.

PAT. I'm different. I'm wise. I can tell the goods from the phoney every time.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Going to* PAT.] Couldn't you teach Nora?

PAT. I'd just as lief she wouldn't learn.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Ah, Pat, me darlin', you're forgettin'. It's a lesson women must learn, somehow, somewhere. Better you nor someone else to stand by an' watch she ain't harmed.

PAT. That's right. [*A noise of a cart is heard approaching. A man's voice calls to the horse,* "Whoa, girl."] I've a hunch that's Dan. Skidoo, Pop. [*She kisses him and shoves him to the door.* O'BRIEN *goes.*] That goes for you, Mom. Guess I don't need no chaperoney.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Sure, I'd trust you anywhere. Ain't you good as gold?

PAT. Gee, Mom, you're there strong with the blarney.

[MRS. O'BRIEN *goes.* PAT *runs across to the mirror, fixes her hair.*

DAN. [*Outside.*] Where is she?

O'BRIEN. [*Outside.*] In there.

[DAN MALLORY, *a splendid specimen of out-door manhood, rushes in and before* PAT *can say a word he has her in his arms, kissing her.*

PAT. Say, do you know you're takin' my breath away?

DAN. Am I?

PAT. I'm supposed to have a mad at you.

[*She moves away.*

DAN. [*Following her.*] Are you?

[*He takes her in his arms again. She snuggles against him, her head on his shoulder.*

PAT. [*Sighing.*] After seventeen weeks a tourin' imitation towns, this is certainly peach preserves.

DAN. [*Tenderly.*] To me you're the only girl in the whole damned universe.

PAT. [*Looking at him proudly.*] When I think a the men I see other women stacked up against, you win, easy.

DAN. I never saw anythin' that was in your class, Patsy. You look like a four-time winner yourself.

PAT. Honest?

[*She goes to the mirror.*

DAN. You're prettier than ever.

PAT. I do think this way a wearin' my hair *is* becomin'.

DAN. Becomin'! It's beautiful. You're beautiful. Everything about you's beautiful.

PAT. Say, ain't you afraid a gettin' pinched for peddlin' hot air without a license?

DAN. You don't know how I missed you.

PAT. Don't I? You missed me this mornin', good an' plenty.

DAN. That was too bad. How long are you going to stay?

PAT. I must hump back to the real puddle tomorrow.

DAN. Tomorrow! Why?

PAT. To connect. The "Moonlight Maids" goes into cold storage.

DAN. So I gathered. Seems to be a bad season for shows.

PAT. [*Sagely.*] It's always a bad season for bad shows with bum backin'. This everlastin' huntin' a job gets on my nerves. I'm tired missin' you, Dan, only seein' you once in a dog's age.

DAN. [*Going to her.*] Pat, I can't have you go. Marry me now. We'll get along, some way.

PAT. An' put a crimp in your prospects? I ain't such a weak-minded slob as that. I was foolish to let that rave outa me. I'm just tired.

DAN. [*Taking her in his arms.*] It breaks me all up, Pat. I know we would make it a go.

PAT. Not by beginnin' wrong on the money proposition. [*She goes to the door to the hall, closes it.*] Just how do we stand? Mom's been hintin', but let's get down to cases. [*She sits.*

DAN. [*Sitting.*] It began at Sheepshead. I thought I had a string of good ones——

PAT. An' they turned out skates.

DAN. I didn't pull off a purse that was more than chicken feed. I had to take in a partner, an' it doesn't look like I'll earn more than my keep for the next six months.

PAT. Where did you dig up this Crawford? How's he goin' to boost your game?

DAN. He's lent me money an' I've given him a half interest in the stables. It was a case of take someone in, or get out myself. But we've some promisin' youngsters that ought to bring a good price. Then I'll pay him up, or sell out to him. But I'm strong to quit this game. Me for a stock farm.

PAT. A stock farm? Where'd Pop and the folks get off?

DAN. They'd come right along with us.

PAT. [*Thoughtfully.*] Then we'd settle down like a couple of Reubens, us an' the cows.

DAN. [*Laughing.*] Not cows, horses.

PAT. [*Regretfully.*] No more playin' dates at Sheepshead or New Orleans?

[DAN *goes to her, leans over the back of her chair and puts his arms about her.*

DAN. No travel at all. [*Tenderly.*] Just stayin' home.

PAT. [*Wistfully.*] "Just stayin' home." Oh, Dan, do you s'pose it would last?

DAN. Why, sure.

PAT. I dunno.

DAN. [*Surprised.*] What?

PAT. I've met more than one doll as has thrown a good man down hard just to get back to the bright lights. They hand out a lot a junk about love for their art, when it's nothin' but a hunch for the excitement. Dan, I ain't no better than anyone else. I'm kinda afraid.

DAN. But I'm not afraid. I know you love me.

PAT. That's no idle dream.

DAN. And that's what counts. Don't you go gettin' all stewed up.

PAT. [*Rises.*] I am a little up-stage today. I'm upset in my mind.

DAN. Anythin' gone wrong?

PAT. Nora's thrown a scare into me.

DAN. Nora?

PAT. Yes, she's got a stage career all doped out an' Mom and Pop's been lettin' her dream. And it's all dead wrong.

DAN. What's wrong about it?

PAT. Every old thing. Say, don't tell me you've encouraged her, too?

DAN. O'Brien asked my advice and I didn't see anythin' to stop her.

PAT. Well, you *are* a lot of yaps. Can't you see she ain't to be trusted outside the front yard? Not that she ain't good and sweet, but she ain't got any head. I don't know where she gets it, but she's shy on knowin' the difference between right an' wrong.

DAN. But if she went with you, Pat?

PAT. But I can't stay with her, Dan; I'm comin' to you.

DAN. Nora's all right.

PAT. I've seen too many just her kind, sweet and pretty, begin well an' end bad.

DAN. If it's as bad as that I'm not going to have *you* in it.

PAT. [*Indignantly.*] What do you mean, Dan Mallory? I didn't say every girl was bad or wanted to be. Do you think I, oh, Dan, that hurts. That hurts.

[*She moves away.*

DAN. [*Following her.*] I'm sorry, Pat. You know I trust you, but I get to worryin' for fear some rich fellow'll want to marry you an'——

PAT. [*Gaily.*] Well, they don't. Though I'm a chump to put you next to the fact. You're the only man as wants me an' you can't lose me, Mr. Mallory.

[*She goes to him. He kisses her.*

DAN. I guess we'll tandem pretty well. Crawford will wonder what's become of me.

PAT. Is he down here?

DAN. Yes, lookin' the string over.

PAT. Don't take all day to do it.

[DAN *leans over her to get a kiss.*

DAN. [*Coaxingly.*] Just to keep me goin'?

PAT. [*Dodging him.*] Nix, come back for it. [*He laughs and goes.* PAT *watches him from the window.*] He's the goods, all right, all right.

[NORA *enters.*

NORA. I'm awfully sorry, Pat.

PAT. [*Going to her.*] Here too. I didn't mean to sit all over you. Forgive me, won't you?

NORA. And you'll take me tomorrow?

PAT. We'll see. We'll have a talk about it all an' maybe then you won't want to go. Where's Mom?

NORA. In the spare room. [PAT *goes.* NORA *begins to busy herself about the kitchen. There is a knock at the*

door. NORA *opens it and* CRAWFORD *enters.*] Oh! Mr. Crawford, you've come to meet Pat. I'll call her.

CRAWFORD. Wait a moment. I want to give you that loan.

NORA. Oh, no, thank you, Mr. Crawford. I've been thinking it over and it doesn't seem right.

CRAWFORD. Has Pat helped you?

NORA. No.

CRAWFORD. Then you still owe the Duke?

NORA. Yes.

CRAWFORD. Suppose you lay another wager, or let me lay it for you?

NORA. But I mightn't win and I'd be worse off than ever.

CRAWFORD. No, I'll give you a sure thing. I'll put up five dollars and I think I can get four to one.

NORA. [*Delighted.*] I'd have twenty dollars. [*Anxiously.*] You're sure I couldn't lose?

CRAWFORD. Positive. Then it's a go? I'll run down towards the end of the week and give you the money.

NORA. I mightn't be here. Maybe Pat's going to take me to New York tomorrow.

CRAWFORD. If she does, come to my office. If not, I'll be here.

NORA. It's too bad for you to take all that trouble.

CRAWFORD. [*Going to her.*] I'd take more trouble than that to see you.

NORA. [*Shyly.*] You're awful sweet about it.

CRAWFORD. So are you, awfully sweet.

[*He leans over and kisses her as* PAT *enters unobserved.*

PAT. [*Sharply.*] Nora!

NORA. [*Embarrassed.*] Oh, Pat, this is Mr. Crawford.

PAT. [*Frostily.*] Delighted to meet you. This your first visit?

CRAWFORD. Yes. [*Meaningly.*] But not ny last.

PAT. [*Insolently.*] That so? [*She turns to* NORA.]

Nora, go pack your trunk. [NORA *runs off delightedly.* PAT *turns to* CRAWFORD.] Won't you sit down?

[*They sit facing each other across the table in mutual antagonism as the curtain falls.*

THE SECOND ACT

A dressing-room in the Longacre Theatre. It is arranged for the accommodation of eight chorus girls. On the wall at the left of the room is a sheet of mirror and underneath it a shelf covered with the litter of theatrical make-up. At the shelf are four chairs. There is a similar arrangement on the right of the room and in the centre of it is a long marble stand with wash-basins four to a side. Over the mirrors are electric-light fixtures unshaded and on the rear wall are rows of hooks for costumes and street clothes. At the back of the room is a door opening into a hall, across which is a door to another dressing-room.

It is a quarter before eight of an April evening. MAI DELANEY *and* MILLY SULTZER, *"ponies,"* EVELYN LARUE, RITA NICHOLS *and* INEZ BLAIR, *show-girls, are in various stages of dress and undress, preparing for the evening performance;* MAI *is seated on the floor, putting on her slippers,* RITA *adding a final touch of rouge,* INEZ *washing her hands,* EVELYN *applying a liquid-white to her arms and shoulders, and* LOU ARCHER, *another show-girl, completely dressed, is seated with her feet cocked up on the wash-stand, engrossed in a paper-covered novel and smoking a cigarette. In a corner of the room, reading a newspaper which conceals her face from the spectators, is another girl, evidently, from what can be seen of her costume, a dancer. There is a high-pitched babel of conversation, which has followed upon* INEZ'S *recital of an adventure of the previous evening.*

MILLY. What'd you say to him, Inez?

INEZ. "What d'you think I am?" says I. "You beat it before I call my brother an' a policeman."

EVELYN. The nerve a' these rah-rah-rah boys!

RITA. Ain't it the limit?

LOU. Fresh Ike.

MAI. Ain't he got a crust, tryin' to kiss a girl an' him ain't got a cent in the world!

MILLY. [*Singing.*] "Would you care if I should leave you? Would——"

RITA. Not if you took your voice with you.

MILLY, MAI, EVELYN *and* INEZ. [*Singing.*] "Would you care if I should leave you——"

LOU. Oh, shut up! You dressin'-room prima donnas give me a pain.

[*Enter* MRS. GEORGIE ADAMS COOTE, *a one-time soubrette, now the wardrobe "lady" of the Longacre Theatre. She is a fat, jovial gossip in an illy fitting skirt and crumpled white shirtwaist. From her belt hangs a pair of scissors, a tape-measure and a pin-cushion. She is carrying over one arm a costume which she has been repairing; in one hand is a pair of slippers, in the other a hat, and on her head is a large picture-hat gaily coloured and elaborately trimmed, looking sadly out of place on her tousled hair which was originally brown, then blonde, afterwards red, and is now a mixture of all three shades and plentifully streaked with grey.*

EVELYN. Say, Georgie'd you mend that waist?

GEORGIE. [*Crisply.*] I certainly did, Miss LaRue.

EVELYN. Well, I hope it stays up. You musta used a red-hot needle and a burnt thread last time fer it fell right offa my shoulders.

GEORGIE. Most a' your clothes seem to get that habit, Miss LaRue. You oughta leave somethin' to the 'magination.

[*She has thrown the costume over the back of a*

chair at the dressing-table on the left of the room, placed the slippers on another chair, and one hat on the shelf, then catching sight of her reflection in the mirror has adjusted the one she is wearing at a very rakish angle and with the aid of a hand-mirror is admiring the back view.

GEORGIE. Rita, seen Miss Simpson tonight?

RITA. Ain't she——[*Turns and sees her hat on* GEORGIE'S *head.*] Well, you've got your nerve with you, wearin' my hat!

[*She snatches the hat off* GEORGIE'S *head. The girls guy her and* GEORGIE *stares after her in speechless indignation as* RITA *flounces out of the room and goes into the dressing-room across the hall. There is a general movement.* MAI *rises, sits at the dressing-table, paints her lips;* EVELYN *adjusts her hat,* MILLY *powders her neck,* INEZ *throws off her kimono and gets her costume.* GEORGIE *hooks her into it.*

GEORGIE. Anyone seen Miss Simpson tonight?

MILLY. Ain't she in her dressin'-room?

INEZ. Simpson don't go till the second act.

MAI. She'll be late tonight. She's being bridesmaid to Maizie Jones.

GEORGIE. For goodness' sake, Mai, that man ain't married Maizie?

MAI. Looks that way.

GEORGIE. Ain't them saucer-eyed blondes wonders?

LOU. It's momma that's the wonder.

EVELYN. That's right, Lou, I tell you what a mother can't do for you in this business.

GEORGIE. Anythin' from makin' you a star to a Duchess.

MILLY. Has he money?

LOU. He's from Pittsburgh.

GEORGIE. No use cryin' over spilt milk, but I wisht we'd a played Pittsburgh when I was with Evangeline. I usta make a real cute boy.

EVELYN. You'd make about a dozen now.

[*The girls laugh.*

GEORGIE. Serves me right for wastin' breath on a lot a chorus girls.

EVELYN. [*Coming to* GEORGIE.] Looka here, don't go callin' me a chorus girl.

GEORGIE. What are you?

EVELYN. I'm a specialty lady. I've been in the front row fer five years.

GEORGIE. An' you'll stay there another ten.

EVELYN. You animated balloon!

GEORGIE. You red-headed spear carrier!

[*They glare at each other.* INEZ, *between them, interferes.* LOU *turns, sees them, rises.*

LOU. Hands off, Blair; let 'em scrap it out.

GEORGIE. [*To* EVELYN.] I'd hand you a slam in the map if I wasn't a lady.

MILLY. [*Rising and going to them.*] Please don't. Everybody's always fightin'.

INEZ. The scraps in here is certainly the limit.

MILLY. I'm goin' to ask to have my dressin'-room changed. Pat and Simpson fights every performance, an' now you two's beginnin'. [*Crying.*] My nerves is just all gone to the devil.

GEORGIE. Too bad about you.

CALL BOY. [*Off.*] Half hour! Half hour! Half hour!

[GEORGIE *stares pugnaciously at* EVELYN, *who looks at her contemptuously and moves away with* LOU. MILLY *returns to her place at the dressing-table.* INEZ *puts her foot on the chair from which* LOU *has risen and ties her shoe-string.* MAI *makes up leisurely, and* RITA, *having complained about* GEORGIE *to the girls in the other room, strolls in, her hat on, and lolls in front of her mirror, admiring herself. The figure reading the newspaper has paid no attention to anyone.*

GEORGIE. Pat's late, too. Is she at the weddin'?

INEZ. She can't stand for Maizie's push.

MILLY. I wonder what Simpson wore at the weddin'? I hope she comes straight here.

INEZ. She won't lose any chance to make a gallery play to us.

[RITA, *bored, rises and again pays a visit to the other dressing-room.* EVELYN *washes her hands.* LOU *joins* MAI. GEORGIE *sits in the chair at the lower end of the dressing-table beside* MAI *and begins to mend the costume she has brought in.*

EVELYN. Talk about havin' coin in bundles, Simpson's goin' to buy a Duke.

MAI. She's awful aristocratic in her ideas.

GEORGIE. Her mother used to wash for the best families.

MILLY. She made it in Wall Street.

GEORGIE. Humph!

LOU. Milly, when it comes to a stall, you're a tapioca.

MILLY. [*Proudly.*] She's goin' to give me a tip in stocks soon as I make a lot a money on the ponies. Girls, don't you wisht we knew who'd win tomorrow?

EVELYN. I wouldn't mind knowin' the name an' address of a horse that's goin' to win.

INEZ. Say, Nora, you don't know of a hundred-to-one shot that's due to be uncorked tomorrow?

[*The person behind the newspaper drops it in her lap, revealing* NORA *in the costume of a dancer.*

NORA. No, I wish I did.

[*She rises and walks down to the chair beside the wash-stand.*

INEZ. [*Sympathetically.*] Say, you look all to the bad tonight. Kinda worried? Can't you figure out the dope?

NORA. [*Sitting wearily.*] Just tired, that's all.

INEZ. Brace up! What's the one best bet for tomorrow?

NORA. [*Reading.*] "First race, Sis Lee, straight; Fourth race, Little Wally to show, the Veiled Lady straight."

MAI. [*Petulantly.*] I don't like none a them names.

MILLY. Veiled Lady's kinda cunnin'.

INEZ. What's the entry?

MILLY. Inez, what'd ye mean by entry?

INEZ. [*Impatiently.*] I've told you a million times. Go on, Nora.

NORA. "Sis Lee, Sailor Boy, Milady Love, King Leopold, Bensonhurst, Immortelle——"

LOU. That's a dead one. What's the dope on the race?

NORA. [*Reading.*] "The opening two-year-old scurry at half a mile shows a well-set field of fair class, with Sis Lee the most probable winner, though scarcely the best horse in the race. In——"

MILLY. How can it win if it ain't the best horse?

LOU. Somebody gag her.

NORA. [*Reading.*] "In March she was beaten a nose at New Orleans by Merrie Lassie."

MILLY. What'd I tell you? You can all do as you like, but none a my money on Miss Sis Lee. D'you hear, Nora?

NORA. All right. [*Reading.*] "Sailor Boy is as good as the day he beat Follow On. Miladi——"

GEORGIE. I used to make a real cute Sailor Boy in pale blue tights, an' a dark blue blouse all trimmed with anchors. I remember——

INEZ. Forget Evangeline fer a moment, as a favour.

NORA. [*Reading.*] "Miladi Love beat King Leopold last summer and raced as well as Bensonhurst. Hard thing to get anything of consequence in this division so early in the year."

INEZ. Well, I should say so.

LOU. To hear him tell it, there ain't a dog in the race.

NORA. The more you read the less you know about it.

MILLY. I'll take Bensonhurst. I was there once an' had a grand time. I wonder if it's a pretty horse.

NORA. Bensonhurst, to win?

MILLY. Why, of course, to win. You ask the silliest questions.

NORA. Inez, give me a piece of paper.

[INEZ *crosses to her place, looks for a bit of paper.*

RITA *returns and expostulates with* EVELYN, *who has, in her absence, gone to her place and taken some of her lip salve.* MAI *rises and goes to* NORA.

MAI. I'm going to pick 'em the old way. Where's the programme?

LOU. Programme? You're a weird bunch of sports.

MAI. Smarty! I picked mine this way yesterday an' I was the only girl that won, wasn't I, Nora?

[*She closes her eyes and places her finger on the racing chart in the newspaper.*

NORA. [*Reading.*] "Immortelle."

MILLY. Immortelle! Oh, Mai, don't take that one. Don't take a creepy horse.

LOU. He wouldn't run one, two, six, in a goat race.

MAI. I'll try again. [*She does so, then looks at the place.*] King Leopold.

EVELYN. [*Coming to them excitedly.*] Ain't that the King that liked chorus girls?

LOU. Me for the King.

RITA. Me, too!

[MAI, *smiling complacently, returns to her dressing-table.* RITA *joins* LOU, *then they go to the other dressing-room.* INEZ *brings a pencil and sheet of paper to* NORA, *who makes a memorandum of the wagers.* GEORGIE *rises, shakes out the costume and hangs it on a hook at the rear of the room.*

GEORGIE. Ain't anyone goin' to make a pool? I'm a little short. I'll go in with someone.

INEZ. If you saved the wad you blow on beer every night after the show——

GEORGIE. [*Indignantly.*] Why, it isn't that I like it. It's the doctor's orders. I have to take a quart or so for insomnia. [*Going to* NORA.] Nora, could you trust me for seventy-five cents? I'd like to split it three ways on Sailor Boy. I s'pose it's foolish to be superstitious, but it's a sure hunch. I usta make a real cute sailor boy.

EVELYN. We know, all trimmed with anchors. You may find some on Sailor Boy at that.

[*The girls laugh.*

GEORGIE. That's right. Sneer at a poor woman with a husband that ain't workin'. Pikers!

[*She flounces out angrily; the girls hoot after her.*

INEZ. Nora, put me down for the usual. Sis Lee across the board.

MILLY. What's across the board? Say, Inez, tell what's across the board.

INEZ. Haven't time. The race is called for three tomorrow.

MILLY. I think you're horrid. It isn't fair. I've just as much right to play across the board as anyone.

NORA. All right, Bensonhurst across the board. I'll get the money after the show.

LOU. [*Running on, followed by* RITA.] Nix with the racing news. Somebody's comin'.

NORA. Maybe it's Pat.

[*She throws the newspaper under the wash-stand and scurries to her place beside* MILLY *and begins to rouge feverishly.* INEZ *and* RITA *follow her and sit.* LOU *and* EVELYN *rush to sit at their places beside* MAI. *All of them begin to make up and to gabble of everything except racing.*

VOICE. [*Outside, in respectful tones.*] Good evening, Miss Simpson.

LOU. [*Disgusted.*] It's only Simpson.

MISS SIMPSON. [*Outside, in a drawling voice.*] I fear I'm a trifle late.

VOICE. [*Outside.*] Don't worry; you needn't go on till the second act.

[*The girls turn and look at one another.*

MISS SIMPSON. [*Outside.*] So good of you.

EVELYN. Always knew she had money in this show.

INEZ. Cinch.

[SYLVIA SIMPSON, *a tall and strikingly handsome wom-*

an of the "show-girl" type, bejewelled and gorgeously attired, appears in the doorway, where she poses briefly, to give the girls who turn to look at her an opportunity to get the full effect of her magnificence.

GIRLS. Hello, Simpson.

SIMPSON. Hello, girls.

[*She saunters in.*

MAI. Did you have a good time?

SIMPSON. [*Affectedly.*] Ciel! Weddings are such a bore.

NORA. Oh, I think they're lovely.

SIMPSON. They're getting frightfully common. Every chorus girl you know is getting married.

NORA. [*Going to her.*] Oh, what a love of a coat!

SIMPSON. [*Sweeping across the room.*] Do you like it?

INEZ. What'd Maizie wear?

SIMPSON. The tightest "Princess" I ever saw.

EVELYN. What else did she have on?

SIMPSON. Not much of anything. As for jewellery——

MAI. Much?

SIMPSON. Much? She looked like a Tiffany showcase.

MILLY. Just like our Prima Donna in the last act.

SIMPSON. Yes, quite vulgar.

INEZ. Was her nibs there?

SIMPSON. The Prima Donna? Oh, dear, no. *She's* not in *our* set.

[*She removes her coat. The girls gasp at the costly beauty of the gown that is revealed as she parades languidly across the room.* NORA, *who has taken the coat, runs over with it to* MILLY. *The other girls cluster about, admiring it; finally* EVELYN, *at the suggestion of* INEZ, *puts it on.*

EVELYN. Lots a people there?

SIMPSON. Oh, crowds! Not a bit classy or smart. I'm sure to half of them Rector's is only a name.

[*She sits.*

LOU. Many you knew?

SIMPSON. [*Getting a cigarette from her case.*] No, but

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lots I expect to. Loads of men introduced themselves to me. Maizie did a real mean thing. *She tried to cut me out of my entrance.*

EVELYN, MAI and MILLY. [*Sympathetically.*] The idea!

LOU. That's an old trick a hers, crowdin' you on.

SIMPSON. I just told her if she thought I blowed in five hundred dollars for this dress, just to be a bridesmaid, she was good and well mistaken. I was there to be looked at, and you bet I was.

NORA. Did that cost five hundred dollars?

SIMPSON. It is rather a roast. But it's a good investment. You've got to look well if you want to get any kind of a salary in this business. [INEZ *giggles.* SIMPSON *turns upon her.*] Did you see anything humorous in that last remark?

INEZ. No! I was thinkin' a somethin' funny.

SIMPSON. If it's a good joke, put us all next.

NORA. [*Trying to stop the impending row.*] Miss Simpson, what horse are you going to play tomorrow?

SIMPSON. [*To* NORA.] I don't know. [*Springs to her feet, blazing mad.*] If anybody has anything to say about me, just speak right out, that's all. [*She sees* EVELYN *in her coat.*] Say, when you girls get through wearing out that coat I'd like what's left of it.

INEZ. Take your old coat.

[*She jerks the coat off* EVELYN *and throws it at* SIMPSON. *Then she,* LOU, EVELYN *and* RITA, *talking viciously about* SIMPSON, *leave the room and disappear in the direction of the stage.* MILLY *gets her costume and* MAI *helps her to adjust it.* SIMPSON *places her coat on a chair, then sits and lights another cigarette.*

SIMPSON. Got anything good, Nora?

NORA. Here's the entry.

SIMPSON. Don't bother me with the entry. Hasn't that friend of yours tipped you off to anything?

NORA. No.

SIMPSON. Say, Nora, I met your friend today.

NORA. What friend?

SIMPSON. What friend? Mr. Crawford.

NORA. You met Mr. Crawford?

SIMPSON. Thought I'd surprise you. He's a friend of Maizie's husband. Soon as he knew I was in this company he asked right away if I knew you, and I said we were great friends. He's asked us out to supper some night.

NORA. I couldn't go.

[*She moves quickly to the dressing-table and sits.*

SIMPSON. Why not? You been out to lunch with him. He don't like Pat a little bit, does he?

NORA. Pat met him only once.

SIMPSON. [*Going to* NORA.] I guess once was enough for him. [*Whispering meaningly.*] Crawford's a good thing if you work him right.

NORA. [*Indignantly.*] Why, Miss Simpson! I wouldn't think of such a thing.

[*She rises and moves away from her.*

SIMPSON. You've been working him for tips, haven't you?

NORA. It isn't the same thing.

SIMPSON. I don't see much difference between tips an' diamonds. He's in love with you. Maybe he'd be just fool enough to marry you. His family have money. I think they'd settle if you bluffed good and hard.

NORA. Please don't talk like that.

[*She goes out in the direction of the stage.*

SIMPSON. [*Calling after her.*] Oh! Don't be silly.

VOICE. [*Outside.*] You're late, O'Brien.

PAT. [*Outside.*] Miss Obreenne, to you, Mr. Stage Manager.

VOICE. [*Outside.*] You get a move on.

PAT. [*Outside.*] Don't you dare! I'm not your slave.

[PAT *appears at the door, meeting* EVELYN *and* INEZ.

VOICE. [*Outside, nearer.*] That'll be about all from you.

PAT. You can take my two weeks now. If you can get anybody to lead this chorus better'n me, get 'em an' get 'em quick.

VOICE. [*Outside.*] Do you mean that?

PAT. Sure I means it. I don't take nothin' from no one.

SIMPSON. That's a good bluff.

PAT. You ought to be wise to bluffs, Simpson; you throw a few. Good evenin', ladies.

[*Followed by* EVELYN *and* INEZ, PAT *walks airily into the room. She is wearing a new suit of brown cloth, a new hat over which is draped an elaborate veil, a small scarf of fur and a muff. The girls gaze at her in admiration,* PAT *enjoying keenly the sensation she is making.*

MILLY. Don't you look grand?

EVELYN. Mighta just stepped out of a suit-case.

[LOU *strolls in.*

PAT. Say, girls, are you pipin' the veil? Ain't it a Susie Smitherino? I don't think it's at all loud, do you?

MAI. [*Going up to get her costume.*] Oh, no!

MILLY. It's sweet.

EVELYN. You look elegant.

LOU. It's a corker!

PAT. Come at me light, girls.

INEZ. I never seen you look sweller. Have you, Simpson?

SIMPSON. [*Sarcastically.*] O'Brien's a tremendously smart dresser.

PAT. Don't get petulant, sweetheart. You ain't the only Daily Hint from Paris.

MILLY. [*Going to* PAT.] Oh, Pat! Them's new furs.

SIMPSON. Isn't it rather late for furs?

PAT. [*Ignoring her.*] Milly! I struck a clearin' sale of furs today at Macy's, cravat an' cushion muff, four ninety-six. Best Adirondack sable! [SIMPSON *laughs derisively.* PAT *advances on her belligerently.*] Say, are you passin' me the giggle?

[SIMPSON *subsides, to the delight of the girls who resented her sneer at* PAT'S *furs which* MILLY, *after examining appreciatively, has reverently put away.*

PAT. Say, Lou, talkin' a sales, ain't that a peach coat?

Nine sixty-eight, silk-lined! Feel that linin'. Ain't it immense? [*She drops the coat in* SIMPSON'S *lap.*] Try it on, Simpson; it might look good on you.

SIMPSON. [*Brushing the coat off her lap.*] I can't wear ready-made clothing.

PAT. You can't wear ready-made clothin'? Girls, ain't that a shame! [*The girls laugh.* LOU *rescues the coat.* PAT *admires herself in the mirror.*] Well, a perfect figure certainly saves you money.

[LOU *hangs the coat on a hook.* PAT *slips off her skirt, showing a petticoat of violent hues.*

EVELYN. Why, you got a new petticoat, too.

PAT. Three forty-three. One of them invisible plaids. Maybe it wouldn't put Fifth Avenue on the blink! [*As* PAT *turns to hang her skirt on a hook,* RITA *enters.*] Hello, Rita. Welcome to our city!

RITA. Hello, Pat.

MAI. That's an awful sweet hat.

PAT. It is a swell lid. I blew myself there. Two ninety-eight. Imported model! They wanted to put a bunch a peacock feathers on the side, but I'm that superstitious.

MILLY. So am I.

PAT. An', what's the use a trimmin' when I have the veil?

[*She takes off her hat and her shirtwaist, hangs them up carefully, then puts on a kimono, steps out of her petticoat, shakes it out admiringly and places it carefully on another hook, talking all the time. The girls are very much interested,* SIMPSON *taking great pains to show that she is horribly bored.*

PAT. Girls, I seen some waists today at Siegel-Cooper's; beauts, all-over lace, three dollars. Real lace! I had to pass them up. After I bought these yellow kicks my pocket-book looked like a disaster.

[*She sits at her place, which is at the lower end of the dressing-table on the left side of the room. The girls, sensing that* PAT *and* SIMPSON, *who invariably*

indulge in a verbal battle when they meet, are about to stage another, are seated at their places in eager expectancy.]

INEZ. You certainly was good to yourself.

PAT. I've been savin' on car-fare an' lunches. I just said it was up to me to refurnish from cellar to dome.

[BLANCHE, SIMPSON'S *"coloured" maid, enters from the dressing-room across the hall, bringing several letters to her mistress.*

SIMPSON. Take my coat, Blanche. [BLANCHE, *taking it, goes.* SIMPSON *looks at the letters.*] People write for autographs. Mon Dieu, what a bore!

[PAT *turns and winks at the girls. She is removing her hair-pins and loosens a bunch of false curls, which she displays.*

PAT. [*Rising.*] Girls, how do you like my Fritzi Scheff's? Take it from me, Silas, them puffs is goin' to be the dead swell article, an' such a bargain! When I tell you the price you'll pass away. I got the puffs the——

INEZ. [*Going to her.*] Real hair?

PAT. [*Indignantly.*] Sure, it's real hair. Feel it. I got the puffs, the bunch a curls—just flash your glims on them curls—and the bayrette, for one seventy-five.

MILLY. [*Going to her.*] Where to? Macy's?

PAT. No. Got 'em from a lady friend at the Casino. She's lettin' her hair go back to brown this season.

[*She returns to the dressing-table.*

INEZ. Oh, say, Pat, I brought up a letter fer you.

PAT. Guys writin' fer autographs. Mon doo, what a bore!

SIMPSON. [*Angrily.*] Are you mimicking me, Miss O'Brien?

PAT. Mimickin' you, Miss Simpson? You ain't got the French language copyrighted, have you? Maybe it's some newspaper guy wants my picture. [SIMPSON *laughs scornfully,* PAT *resents it.*] I been in the Sunday *Telegraph* twict this season.

MILLY. Oh, didn't you love it?

PAT. No. I hate publicity, but anythin' to help the manager along.

MILLY. [*Going to her.*] Do you know any real reporters?

PAT. I got a couple on me staff.

MILLY. Say, who's your letter from? From your gentleman friend? The one you told me about, you know. Dan?

PAT. [*Reading.*] Sure, he writes me every day, sometimes twict. He's got a surprise for me, something swell. He's goin' to be out in front tonight. Gee! I must tell Nora.

CALL BOY. [*Outside.*] Fifteen minutes.

[INEZ *and* MILLY *run to their places. All the girls begin to add last touches to their make-up.*

PAT. Gee, I must get to work. Evelyn, gimme my dress, will you? Girls, who do you think I seen today at Macy's?

MAI. Who?

PAT. Mrs. Carter.

MILLY. Leslie Carter?

PAT. Leslie Carter. She was buyin' spangles.

INEZ. Did you see her close to?

PAT. I could a touched her. I rubbered to beat the band. Don't you just love Carter?

INEZ. You bet.

PAT. Honest, I think that woman's got the most emotional hair in this business.

EVELYN. [*Going up for* PAT's *costume.*] I've seen her in *everythin'* she plays.

PAT. So have I. You know, Carter's a whole lot on my style.

SIMPSON. I hadn't noticed it.

PAT. Well, you know you're near-sighted. Milly! You know I'm really cut out for one of them emotional all-over-the-place actresses.

MILLY. [*Sighing.*] I know, an' wear spangled dresses an' smoke cigarettes.

MAI. Wouldn't it be sweet?

[PAT *has "slapped" on her make-up.* EVELYN *has*

brought down her costume. PAT *rises, goes to her,* EVELYN *helps her.*

EVELYN. I wouldn't care *what* it was so long as I could wear pale blue tights. I'm just wasted in skirts.

PAT. Nix for mine, this tights gag. [SIMPSON *laughs sarcastically.*] Not that I can't wear 'em. Simpson, I hate to talk about my figger, but I could make the Venus de Milo look like May Irwin. I'm only in musical comedy to learn to be graceful. I bet I could get a backer to star me if I could get the play, but gee, it's hard to get a good tragic play. Of course I could get one from Charlie Frohman, but I don't want to take it away from Maude Adams or Ethel Barrymore. I can always dance for my livin'.

SIMPSON. You're a hit with yourself, aren't you?

PAT. Girls, I'm no knocker, an' you never hear me leadin' any anvil chorus, but [*looking meaningly at* SIMPSON] if certain parties were where they belonged, they'd be makin' beds. Gee, I must get a move on. Evelyn, would you mind braidin' my hair?

EVELYN. No.

[PAT *sits at the mirror. She removes a transformation, revealing a tiny wisp of hair.* EVELYN *begins to braid it.*

PAT. You wouldn't believe I had grand hair once.

EVELYN. Really?

PAT. I used to could sit on it. I just ruined it Marcellin' it.

EVELYN. [*Holding up a tiny braid.*] What'll I do with this?

PAT. Twist the ends under.

EVELYN. They won't stay twisted.

PAT. They won't? [*She takes a hand-mirror and looks at the back view.*] Them ends used to stay twisted somethin' grand. Here's a piece a string; tie it up. Where's Nora?

EVELYN. She was here a minute ago.

PAT. I wisht I was pretty as Nora. Where's my wig

band? There it is. [*She pins it around her head and looks at the effect.*] Say, girls, you know what's the matter with my face? It's too classical.

SIMPSON. You hate yourself, don't you?

PAT. [*Gazing at her reflection.*] Say, don't I look like Ellen Terry? Gee, I just noticed it. [*Striking a pose.*] Look, look now.

EVELYN. Yes, you do.

VOICE. [*Outside.*] Any laundry?

GIRLS. No.

PAT. [*Yelling.*] Hold on, laundry man. I'm lookin' for that guy. [*She runs up to the door and opens it.*] Well, you got a fine noive comin' here fer laundry. You kept mine a whole week last time. Honest, girls, I didn't have a stitch to my back.

VOICE. How much did you have?

PAT. Four pieces.

VOICE. What were they?

PAT. I had a skirt, a shirt-waist, an' a—say, looka here, Fresh, it's none a your business what I had. Ain't it awful? I'll never get made up.

[*She slams the door.*

VOICE. [*Outside.*] Overture! Overture!

[MILLY, INEZ, RITA, LOU, EVELYN *and* MAI *dash out.* PAT *starts to her dressing-table.*

NORA. [*Outside.*] Oh, stop. Oh, please stop!

[*She enters.*

PAT. What is it, honey lamb?

NORA. That old tenor tried to kiss me.

PAT. [*Going to the door, calls off.*] Say you, tenor! Yes, you! You leave my sister alone, d'ye hear? [*She slams the door.*] Beast!

SIMPSON. You're speaking about a friend of mine.

PAT. Well, if you want to associate with him, that's your affair. But he can't get busy around my sister.

SIMPSON. How dare you?

PAT. [*Hurrying to the mirror.*] Oh, fade away, Simpson; fade quick.

SIMPSON. Your sister's so much better than I am. That's the best laugh I've had this season.

[PAT *is adjusting her wig. Suddenly her movements are arrested as she sees in the mirror the effect of* SIMPSON'S *words on* NORA. *Motionless she stands watching their reflections.*

NORA. [*Running to* SIMPSON.] Oh, Miss Simpson!

SIMPSON. Don't Miss Simpson me! I'm sick of you putting on airs about being so good and virtuous. You're a little sneak. Do you think I'm going to put up with your sister's impudence and me knowing what I do about you?

PAT. [*Turning upon* SIMPSON.] What do you mean?

SIMPSON. What do I mean? Ask her about her friend, Mr. Crawford.

PAT. Crawford!

SIMPSON. Yes. Your sweet little sister who's too good to associate with me is carrying on with Dick Crawford, going to lunch with him, making dates with him after the show, playing his tips. We're all playing his tips.

PAT. It's a lie.

SIMPSON. Ask any of the girls. Look at her, and then ask me—if it's a lie.

NORA. [*Pleadingly.*] Oh, Pat!

SIMPSON. You'd better look at home, Miss Pat O'Brien, before you go casting slurs on other people's characters.

[*She goes and as she opens the door the first bars of the overture are heard in the distance. She slams the door angrily.* PAT *stands speechless.* NORA, *her head bowed, is sobbing bitterly.*

NORA. Pat! Oh, Pat!

[PAT *goes to* NORA, *takes her roughly by the shoulders.*

PAT. Look at me. Have you gone to the bad?

NORA. [*Indignantly.*] Why, Pat!

PAT. [*Taking* NORA *in her arms.*] Thank God! Now what about this Crawford?

NORA. He's been kind to me.

PAT. Kind! Is it kind gettin' you talked about, compromisin' you, the dog!

NORA. He helped me out a debt.

PAT. Debt? Who'd you owe money to?

NORA. The girls.

PAT. The girls! How?

NORA. I placed their bets on the Montgomery Handicap. Mr. Crawford gave me the tips. I took their winnings an'——

PAT. No, no, I won't believe it. You took their money?

NORA. Not all of it.

PAT. Where's what's left?

NORA. I didn't have money enough to pay them all, so I went to Mr. Crawford thinking I could double the money. He gave me a tip. I plunged and lost it all.

PAT. It was a trap.

NORA. The girls kept asking me for their winnings. I couldn't stand it any longer. I just had to go back to Mr. Crawford. He gave me three hundred dollars.

PAT. [*Sinking into a chair.*] Three hundred dollars! How could it be that much?

NORA. The girls each bet five dollars and at ten to one it soon mounts up. Oh, Pat, how it mounted up!

PAT. What's Crawford to you that he'd give you so much money?

NORA. Why, nothing. It was business. I signed a paper. Mr. Crawford said to sign Pop's name——

PAT. You forged Pop's name?

NORA. Forged?

PAT. Can't you see? Can't you see! He can make Pop pay that money. We've gotta get that note.

NORA. Perhaps I can get it.

PAT. How?

NORA. Mr. Crawford's been asking me to take supper at his apartments after the show. I'll go tonight——

PAT. [*Rising.*] Go to his rooms? Ain't you got no

sense? You won't go, do you hear me? Think you can get that note without payin', an' payin' dear for it? You leave it to me.

[*She goes to the dressing-table, and begins to whiten her arms.*

NORA. What are you going to do?

PAT. I'll go to his office tomorrow. I'll tell him a thing or two.

NORA. If you make him angry he'll tell father.

PAT. If he makes a move like that, you'll tell Pop first.

NORA. Oh, Pop'd never forgive me. Oh! Why did you bring me here?

[*She sinks sobbing into a chair.*

PAT. [*Turning on her bitterly.*] Why did I bring you here? Because I felt it in my bones that he'd come snoopin' round after I was gone an' I brings you here, right to him, makin' it easy and convenient for him to play his little game. How he must be givin' me the laugh! He knew I was next, an' I swore to Mom I'd look after you an' see no harm'd come to you. If this gets home it seems to me I couldn't ever look her in the face again.

[*There is a knock on the door.* NORA, *frightened, springs to her feet. There is a slight pause.*

PAT. What is it?

VOICE. [*Outside.*] Message from the stage door for Miss O'Brien. Mr. Mallory asked me to tell you that your mother and father wuz in front tonight and would you please hurry home after the show.

NORA. [*Wildly.*] I can't face them. I can't face them!

PAT. Brace up, brace up! Hush! Hush!

NORA. I can't dance tonight. It's no use. I can't do it.

PAT. But you gotta dance. The curtain's goin' up. Stay here; I'll get somethin' from Georgie to brace you up.

[*She rushes off towards the stage. Through the opened door come the strains of a gay waltz.* NORA *is crying hysterically as she walks up and down the room talking to herself.*

NORA. I got to go to him. I can't face Pop and Mom without that note.

CALL BOY. [*Rushing past the door.*] Act's on! Act's on! Act's on!

NORA. [*Running to the door.*] Boy, get me a cab! Quickly! Quickly!

[NORA, *seizing her coat from the rack by the door, dashes down the hall in the direction of the stage door. The overture ends in a crash of sound.* INEZ *and* MAI *dart out of the dressing-room across the hall and rush towards the stage.* PAT *runs in carrying a glass.*

PAT. [*At the door.*] Here, Nora. [*She stops at the sight of the empty room.*] Gone! [*Then it dawns on her.*] To Crawford's.

[*She puts the glass down and rushes up to the rack; grabs her street clothes, throws them on a chair.* MILLY *comes running in.*

MILLY. Pat! They're holding the curtain.

PAT. Let 'em hold it.

[*She is tearing off her costume in frantic haste as the curtain falls.*

THE THIRD ACT

DICK CRAWFORD'S *apartment in New York—an attractively and luxuriously furnished living-room; on the left at the farther end of the room is a door to the hall, on the right a fireplace and a door to a bedroom, at the back a large window. There are comfortable chairs, a large table with newspapers, magazines, a lamp and a silver box containing cigars; on a side table are decanters and glasses and on a small table at the left of the room are a tobacco jar, cigarettes and matches. Sporting prints hang on the walls and the mantelpiece is crowded with silver cups and autographed photographs of actresses. The curtains are drawn, the lamp is lighted and a fire is burning in the grate.* NORA *is seated by the fireplace.* ROGERS, CRAWFORD'S *man servant, enters from the hall.* NORA *rises quickly.*

NORA. [*Anxiously.*] Couldn't you find Mr. Crawford?

ROGERS. Yes, I found him at the club. I had him on the telephone.

NORA. Will he be here soon?

ROGERS. He'll be here right away. The club is just around the corner. Is there anything else I can do for you?

NORA. No, thank you.

[*The sound of the opening and closing of a door is heard.*

ROGERS. I think that's Mr. Crawford now. [*He goes to the door.*] Yes, it is.

[*He leaves the room.* NORA *stands at the fireplace, nervously twisting her handkerchief.* CRAWFORD *enters.*

CRAWFORD. Oh, it's you. [*He goes to her and takes her hands.*] This is a pleasant surprise. I'm sorry I wasn't here to welcome you, but you've said "no" so many times I'd given up hope. Why, how pretty you look! It's only nine o'clock. How did you get away so early?

NORA. [*Moving away.*] I didn't go on tonight. I—I wanted to see you.

CRAWFORD. [*Following her.*] Not half so much as I wanted to see you. Come sit down and be comfortable. We'll have a bite to eat and something to drink.

NORA. I can't, Mr. Crawford. I've got to get back to the theatre right away.

CRAWFORD. Oh, that's all right. They won't make any trouble. I stand pretty well at the Longacre and I'll square it for you.

NORA. It isn't the theatre, Mr. Crawford. I'm in great trouble.

CRAWFORD. Why, what's the matter?

NORA. Father and mother are in front tonight. I must have that note I signed.

CRAWFORD. [*Uneasily.*] Does O'Brien know about it?

NORA. No.

CRAWFORD. [*Relieved.*] Don't let that worry you. We'll talk it over presently. There's loads of time. We've the whole evening.

NORA. No, no. I must go home right away. I must have that note. I can't face him without it. I'm a forger. Why did you make me a forger? I didn't know. I'm horribly afraid.

[*She drops into a chair by the table and covers her face with her hands.* CRAWFORD *comes to her, takes her hands from her face and kisses them.*

CRAWFORD. Afraid? Of whom?

NORA. Of father. Of you. You'll give it to me, won't you? I'll pay you the money somehow.

CRAWFORD. [*Meaningly.*] I don't want the money. [NORA *relieved.*] I want you.

[*He leans over and kisses her.* NORA *is frightened.*

NORA. Oh, please, Mr. Crawford.

[*She runs away from him.* CRAWFORD *follows her.*

CRAWFORD. Don't you care about me at all?

NORA. Why—yes—but please give me that note and let me go. I'll come some other time and have supper with you.

CRAWFORD. But there's no time like the present. Why, you're shivering. Sit here by the fire and I'll get you a glass of something. [*He places her in the chair at fireplace and crosses to the table. There is a knock at the door.*] Come in!

ROGERS. Mr. Mallory's calling, sir.

CRAWFORD. Mallory?

NORA. [*Rising quickly in alarm.*] Dan!

CRAWFORD. I'm not at home.

ROGERS. Beg pardon, sir, but he telephoned earlier in the evening. He said it was important business and I told him you'd be here, sir. I'm sorry, sir, but I didn't think you'd be *engaged.*

CRAWFORD. [*To* NORA.] What's he doing in town?

NORA. He came with mother and father.

CRAWFORD. Show him in. [ROGERS *goes.* NORA *exclaims.*] That's all right. You wait in here. I'll get rid of him.

NORA. I'm so frightened.

CRAWFORD. Nonsense.

[*He puts her quickly into the bedroom and closes the door as* ROGERS *enters, followed by* DAN.

ROGERS. Mr. Mallory.

CRAWFORD. Hello, Mallory.

DAN. How are you, Crawford?

CRAWFORD. Rogers, take Mr. Mallory's coat.

DAN. Can't stop but a minute. [ROGERS *goes.*] I left O'Brien an' his wife at the theatre, an' told them I'd run over to see you but promised to be back after the first act. Surprised you, eh?

CRAWFORD. Rather!

[*He sits.*

DAN. Thought I'd run up to town an' talk over that McGovern matter. The old folks had got to worryin' about the girls, so I brought them along. Mrs. O'Brien got it into her head that somethin' was wrong.

CRAWFORD. [*Startled.*] Has she heard anything?

DAN. No, a dream or somethin'. You know what mothers are.

[*He sits.*

CRAWFORD. [*Relieved.*] I guess her girls are all right.

DAN. Sure, seen 'em lately?

CRAWFORD. I've run into them on the street a couple of times and of course I've seen them in the piece.

DAN. Great show, ain't it? I came up for the openin'. Nora did mighty well for a new beginner, but, say, isn't Pat great? When she comes on in that second act leadin' that bunch of girls in that white dress with all those shiny flumidoodles an' that sassy hat perched on her little blonde head, she's the hit of the show to me.

CRAWFORD. Looks pretty nice.

DAN. She ought to be playin' a part. Maybe it's just as well. She wouldn't be so willin' to give it up. I haven't said anythin' before, Crawford, but if the stable keeps on with this run of luck you'll be gettin' a weddin' invitation one of these days.

CRAWFORD. Congratulations, old man. Here, we ought to have a drink on that. [*He rises and pours a couple of drinks from a decanter on the table.*] To Pat!

DAN. [*Rising.*] To Pat!

CRAWFORD. Here's hoping you're happy.

DAN. Happy? It's a cinch. [*They drink.*] Well, I guess I've landed McGovern.

CRAWFORD. Good work.

[*They sit.*

DAN. Yes, it means a big thing for the stable. When the wise ones find out that old McGovern, the wisest boy

of 'em all, pays a good stiff figure for Lady Belle, it will give the string a good boost an' we ought to get fancy prices.

CRAWFORD. [*Offering a cigar.*] What are you holding Lady Belle at?

DAN. Five thousand.

CRAWFORD. And——

DAN. We've done a tall stunt of hagglin' but he was around to see me tonight before dinner. I told him to call you up. He'll run up a telephone bill for five dollars trying to get you to take four thousand nine hundred an' ninety nine. He's a gabby old guy, but don't let him wear you out. He'll pay the figure.

CRAWFORD. I like your nerve, sicking him at me.

DAN. Had to get rid of him somehow. He'd be talkin' yet an' I was hungry.

[*Enter* ROGERS.

ROGERS. Telephone, sir.

DAN. I'll bet that's McGovern now.

[*He goes over to the table at the left in search of matches.* CRAWFORD, *rising, glances uneasily towards the door to the bedroom.* DAN *turns and* CRAWFORD, *seeing that* DAN *is looking at him curiously, laughs and leaves the room. The door to the bedroom opens.* NORA *looks out, sees* DAN, *whose back is turned to her as he lights his cigar. She makes an exclamation of dismay.* DAN *turns quickly and sees her hand as it is closing the door. He chuckles.*

DAN. Gee, I guess I'm buttin' in on somethin'.

CRAWFORD. [*Entering.*] It's for you, Mallory.

DAN. Now see here, Crawford, that isn't fair. I've had more than my share of McGovern.

CRAWFORD. It isn't McGovern. It's someone at the Longacre Theatre.

DAN. [*Alarmed.*] The theatre! Wonder what's up?

[*He goes.* CRAWFORD *runs to the bedroom door, opens it and* NORA *appears.*

NORA. Has he gone?

CRAWFORD. Not yet, but he will be very soon.

NORA. [*Alarmed.*] He doesn't suspect that I'm here?

CRAWFORD. Why should he?

NORA. [*Plaintively.*] I don't know, but I wish I were at home.

CRAWFORD. Now, don't get rattled.

NORA. He won't find me?

CRAWFORD. Not if I can help it.

[DAN'S *laugh is heard outside.* CRAWFORD *hastily closes the door and moves to the centre of the room.* DAN *enters laughing.*

DAN. It was O'Brien. He says they can't find their girls on the stage an' Mrs. O'Brien's in the lobby insistin' that someone has stolen their darlin's. Isn't it rich? They don't recognise 'em in their stage get-up. I must get a move on. I bet O'Brien has his hands full. Where's my hat? I'll call you up in the mornin' before I leave. What's the quickest way down town?

CRAWFORD. You can take the Subway at 86th street, get off at 42nd street.

DAN. Well, good night.

CRAWFORD. Good night. [DAN *leaves and presently the door is heard to slam outside.* CRAWFORD *goes up to the fireplace, presses the button, then pours another drink.* ROGERS *enters.*] I will want a bite of supper later.

ROGERS. Yes, sir. When?

CRAWFORD. In about an hour.

ROGERS. What would you like, sir?

CRAWFORD. I don't know. What would you suggest? Birds?

ROGERS. Hardly, sir. You've got to be eddicated up to birds. I should say a chicken salad and ice cream and a sweet champagne.

CRAWFORD. I can't eat that truck.

ROGERS. No, sir. Certainly not, sir.

[*The door bell rings sharply, then again.* ROGERS *hurries to answer it.*

CRAWFORD. Who the devil is that?

[*The voices of* PAT *and* ROGERS *are heard outside in excited argument.*

PAT. I must see him.

ROGERS. But you can't see him, Miss.

PAT. I will see him. [*She bursts into the room, followed by* ROGERS.] Is my sister here?

CRAWFORD. Your sister?

PAT. Yes, Nora.

CRAWFORD. I've just come in. My man might know. Rogers, has a young lady called within the last five minutes?

ROGERS. *No,* sir.

CRAWFORD. That will do, Rogers.

[ROGERS *leaves.*

PAT. That's kind a funny. She ain't at the show shop. I thought sure she came here.

CRAWFORD. Did Miss Nora say she was coming here?

PAT. No.

[CRAWFORD *shrugs his shoulders.* PAT *is disconcerted.*

CRAWFORD. Perhaps she went home.

PAT. She had a date with you, didn't she? [CRAWFORD *pretends blank ignorance.*] You asked her out to supper, didn't you?

CRAWFORD. I've invited her several times, but we haven't had supper together yet.

PAT. Maybe I got here ahead of her. Maybe she'll be here later.

CRAWFORD. I haven't received any word that she'll be here later.

PAT. Well, I gotta see her important. I'll wait a few minutes if you don't mind.

CRAWFORD. [*Annoyed.*] Certainly not.

PAT. You ain't awful affable. I could use a chair if it was handed me.

CRAWFORD. I beg your pardon, Miss O'Brien.

[*He offers her a chair.* PAT *sits wearily, and to* CRAWFORD'S *intense annoyance begins to remove her hat.*

PAT. Gee, I'm tired. I done a hard chase here. Ain't it awful the way those hat pins can crimp you? Would I be takin' a liberty if I asked for a drink?

CRAWFORD. Certainly not. What will it be, a glass of champagne?

PAT. Nix with the wealthy water.

CRAWFORD. A glass of beer?

PAT. No suds in mine. Just plain croton. [CRAWFORD *goes to get her a glass of water.* PAT *rises and walks about.*] This place is awful cute and cozy. You must enjoy life to beat the band, nothin' on your mind but your hair. [PAT *sees the door to the bedroom and goes toward it.*] How many rooms you got?

CRAWFORD. Two.

PAT. [*At the door.*] Where does this door go to?

CRAWFORD. [*Casually.*] Oh, that's a sort of closet for my man. [PAT *moves away.* CRAWFORD *gives her the glass.*] Here's looking at you. [PAT *drinks.*] Aren't you dancing tonight?

PAT. [*Sitting.*] No, I got the pip in me ankle. Got too gay at rehoisal yesterday.

CRAWFORD. [*Making conversation.*] Dancing must be very hard work. It looks so acrobatic.

PAT. The smile's the hard part a dancin'. It's no cinch stannin' on one toe with the other pointin' to a quarter to six, an' then look like the cat that's just eat the canary. I've often wished I'd gone into Wall Street. I got a great head for biziness. Now, Nora's just the opposite. Wonder where she is? Oh, well, no use worryin'. I'm enjoyin' myself. [*She takes off her coat.*] Gee, it's hot in here. Say, what was we talkin' about?

CRAWFORD. [*Sarcastically.*] Yourself, I think.

PAT. [*Meaningly.*] Let's talk about Nora.

CRAWFORD. Nora?

PAT. Yes, Nora. [*With menace.*] I want you to let my sister alone. She's new to the game an' she's a good kid.

CRAWFORD. I guess she's able to take care of herself, and when a girl's good——

PAT. She's good anywhere. I know all about that. An' that other one about "the wages a sin bein' death." Well, maybe, but say, when you're scrimpin' along on twenty per an' the next girl to you in the dressin'-room comes down to the show shop every night in a benzine buzz waggin, in ermine capes and diamonds big as oysters, it ain't religion so much as a firm grip on home and mother that keeps you handin' out the icy eye to the man behind the bank roll. You see, Nora's an awful ninny. Why, she even thinks that note you've gotta hers is good. Honest, when she told me I nearly laffed myself to death.

[*She laughs.*

CRAWFORD. [*Annoyed.*] It's good, all right.

PAT. Quit yer kiddin'.

CRAWFORD. It's good for three hundred dollars.

PAT. Get a transfer, Crawford; get a transfer. It's only a forgery an' a bum one at that.

CRAWFORD. I don't believe Mr. P. O'Brien would put it to protest if I presented it at my bank for payment.

PAT. But you ain't goin' to do that.

CRAWFORD. That depends.

PAT. [*"Jollying" him.*] You wouldn't show Nora up to her father. You're too good a sport fer that.

CRAWFORD. I'm a good sport all right but I'm not a mark. That money is due me honestly and I'm going to get value received.

PAT. [*Angrily.*] Honestly! You don't call leadin' a girl a seventeen into makin' a fool a herself an' puttin' her father's name to paper honest? If you ask me, it's a bunk.

CRAWFORD. But I'm not asking you. If you please we'll not discuss it.

PAT. [*Rising, goes to him.*] Sure we'll discuss it, here, now. Saves me a trip to your office tomorrow.

CRAWFORD. This concerns your sister and me.

PAT. You mean, it's none a my business.

CRAWFORD. Precisely.

PAT. I'm going to make it my business. This note with the phoney signature brings Pop an' the family into the muss.

CRAWFORD. The matter is entirely between your sister and me. We are competent to manage our affairs.

PAT. You can manage yours all right, but I'll have a hand in managin' my sister's or know the reason why. I've promised my mother to take care a her an' you bet your life I'm goin' to.

CRAWFORD. And I'm going to protect my interests.

PAT. You're not goin' about it right. Your interest in Dan Mallory's stable's a pretty good thing, ain't it?

CRAWFORD. What has that to do with it?

PAT. You get gay with that phoney note, an' I'll show you up. [*Jeeringly.*] Dan wouldn't do a thing to you.

CRAWFORD. He wouldn't jeopardise the future of his stables.

PAT. He wouldn't? A lot you know about it. He'll dump you an' that stable so quick on my say so it'll make your head swim. I'm givin' you the right steer, Crawford. If you've gotta lick a sense you'll pass over that note, an' let me go home. [*Picking up her hat and coat.*] I guess Nora ain't comin'.

ROGERS. [*Enters agitatedly.*] Mr. Crawford, Mrs. O'Brien's in the hall.

PAT. Mom!

CRAWFORD. I can't see her.

ROGERS. She won't leave without seeing you.

[PAT *looks about wildly.*

PAT. What'll I do? Where'll I go?

[*She rushes to the door of the bedroom.*

CRAWFORD. No, no, not there.

[*Before* CRAWFORD *can stop her* PAT *rushes into the room, slamming the door behind her. An instant's pause, then* PAT'S *voice is heard in heartbroken surprise exclaiming* "Nora." ROGERS *shows in* MRS. O'BRIEN. *She wears her "Sunday best," a black silk dress, a fichu, a Paisley shawl and a bonnet. She is very much agitated. She glances quickly about the room.*

CRAWFORD. Good evening, Mrs. O'Brien.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Good evenin', Mr. Crawford.

CRAWFORD. Won't you be seated?

[CRAWFORD'S *manner reassures* MRS. O'BRIEN, *who controls herself and sits.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Thank you, sir. I hope you'll pardon the intrusion.

CRAWFORD. [*Sitting.*] It's not an intrusion, I assure you.

[*There is a pause.* MRS. O'BRIEN *is embarrassed, and makes several efforts to address* CRAWFORD. *She finally plucks up courage.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. I'm in great distress, Mr. Crawford.

CRAWFORD. Yes?

MRS. O'BRIEN. I've had a terrible fright. I can't find trace of me girls.

CRAWFORD. Indeed? Can I be of any assistance to you?

[*There is another pause.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*More embarrassed.*] I've somethin' to ask you, Mr. Crawford. Promise you won't take an offence at an old woman.

CRAWFORD. Certainly not.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Do you know aught of my Nora?

CRAWFORD. I don't understand.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Mallory was here, was he not?

CRAWFORD. Yes.

MRS. O'BRIEN. You were here when O'Brien telephoned.

CRAWFORD. Yes. He said you didn't recognise your daughters on the stage.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Good reason, they weren't there. I couldn't wait fer Danny to come, so O'Brien an' me found our way to the back door of the theatre, thinkin' they might be in their dressin'-rooms.

CRAWFORD. They were not there?

MRS. O'BRIEN. They sent down a young lady, a Miss Simpson, and she says to me, that they didn't know where Pat was, but that maybe Nora had gone to Mr. Crawford's. O'Brien was for comin' here, but he's hasty an' I thought he might offend you, so I persuaded him to go home.

CRAWFORD. [*Rises.*] I'm very sorry, Mrs. O'Brien, not to be able to give you any assistance.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Rising.*] How comes my Nora's name to be linked with yours?

CRAWFORD. That's chorus girl gossip. I've tried to be nice to the girls because of my friendship for you and O'Brien.

MRS. O'BRIEN. 'Tis meant kindly, Mr. Crawford, but it has done harm for what that young woman intimated made me ashamed for me darlin'.

CRAWFORD. I'm very sorry, Mrs. O'Brien. I meant no harm.

MRS. O'BRIEN. 'Tis relieved I am to find she's not here. She and Pat's off somewhere together, likely.

CRAWFORD. Quite probably. Did they expect you?

MRS. O'BRIEN. No. 'Twas my idea to surprise them. Danny left word but I misdoubt they got it. I'll just be goin' along. Thank you, Mr. Crawford, for your kindness.

[*She turns to go.* ROGERS *enters.*

ROGERS. Mr. Mallory is here, sir.

[DAN *rushes past* ROGERS *into the room.*

DAN. [*To* MRS. O'BRIEN.] I followed you. O'Brien said you had come here for Nora.

[ROGERS *leaves.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. She's not here.

DAN. I'm not so sure of that.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Whatever do you mean, Danny?

CRAWFORD. [*Indignantly.*] Yes, I'd like to know what you mean?

DAN. Miss Simpson was very positive that Nora had come to see you.

CRAWFORD. I'm quite as positive that Miss Simpson was mistaken.

DAN. Nora is not here?

CRAWFORD. Of course not.

DAN. [*Going towards him.*] Who was the woman in that room when I was here before?

CRAWFORD. What woman?

DAN. The woman you hid in there when I was announced. The woman who stole out of that room while you were at the telephone, thinkin' I had gone. She saw me an' stole back again. I saw her hand closin' the door.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Are you deceivin' me, Mr. Crawford?

CRAWFORD. Deceiving you, Mrs. O'Brien?

MRS. O'BRIEN. For the love of God don't tell me my Nora's there.

CRAWFORD. I have already told you, Mrs. O'Brien, that I know nothing about your daughter. That Nora's not here. Mr. Mallory's talking nonsense.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Sure, Dan, Mr. Crawford's given you his word; come away, boy.

DAN. I'll come away when I have had a look through that other room.

[*He starts for the bedroom.* CRAWFORD, *trying to intercept him, is thrown aside roughly by* DAN *who pulls the door open.* PAT, *who has been holding it closed, is dragged into the room. She closes the door hastily and stands against it, barring the way.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Sinking into a chair.*] Pat! You, that I thought was good as gold.

PAT. I'm not what you both think.

DAN. Then what brings you here in the night to this man's rooms? Speak to me. [PAT *is silent.*] Answer me.

PAT. I came here to see Mr. Crawford on a matter a business.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Rising.*] Come away with us, girl.

PAT. I can't.

DAN. You can't, why not?

CRAWFORD. You'd better go.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Come Pat, your father may follow us here at any moment.

CRAWFORD. I'd advise you to go. I don't want a scene with O'Brien.

DAN. [*Turning on* CRAWFORD.] O'Brien was right. He never trusted you, you blackguard, destroyin' the daughter of the man that made you welcome in his home, deceivin' him, deceivin' me that believed in you, deceivin' her, bringin' shame on her. By God—I'll——

[*He goes towards* CRAWFORD *threateningly.* PAT *stops him quickly.*

PAT. Don't quarrel, Dan. I've had enough to bear. I don't want to separate you two. Think what you'll lose.

DAN. [*Turning on her.*] Lose? I've lost everythin', losin' you. [*To* CRAWFORD.] We're down an' out from now, Crawford.

CRAWFORD. As you please, and now that our affairs are in a measure settled——

DAN. [*Grimly.*] Settled? We've just begun.

PAT. No, no, Dan. I know everythin's dead against me, but you don't know, you don't know.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Know? We know you've brought disgrace on me an' your old father an' Nora. Where is she? What have you done with my Nora? [*Bitterly.*] You that was to watch over her?

PAT. I've taken care a her all right.

DAN. How? By passin' her off to them girls at the theatre as this man's sweetheart?

PAT. Who said that?

DAN. The Simpson woman. Didn't you lead them to think that Nora was comin' to his rooms, when it was yourself? Where is she?

PAT. I don't know where she is. We've quarrelled.

DAN. About this man?

PAT. Yes, about this man.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*To* DAN.] Come, it will do no good to stay.

CRAWFORD. She's right, Mallory. I advise you to go. I've had a few hard things said to me tonight, and I'm not in the humour for any more.

DAN. You'll have a few hard things done to you before I get through with you.

PAT. No, no, Dan. I can explain. [DAN *turns to her hopefully.*] But not now, you've gotta trust me.

DAN. I did trust you. I trusted him an' you've both made a fool of me.

PAT. No, no, Dan. Take Mom away; I can make it all right with you.

DAN. [*Contemptuously.*] You can make it all right with me? I suppose you think I'm not wise to the kind of woman you've turned out to be. I suppose you thought when he got through with you an' he cast you off you'd come to me. He's one of the rich men you wuz willin' to give up for me. Well, you needn't. If money counts for more than love you're welcome to it an' to him.

[*He turns to leave.*

PAT. [*Following him.*] Love, a lot you know about it. Love is trust. An' you're the man I banked on an' the first minute I puts you to the test you fall down hard. If you think I'm bad you can think it. I'm through with you.

[*She takes her position again at the door.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Angrily.*] Have you no shame to stand there and brazen it out before the man who loves you? [*To* DAN.] Let her father settle with this man.

DAN. No. Do you think he's goin' to wreck her life an' wreck all my hopes an' go scot free? No, he's goin' to answer to me.

[*He advances menacingly towards* CRAWFORD.

CRAWFORD. I'm not going to fight with you. I'm not going to have my name mixed up in a dirty scandal with a lot of race track hangers-on and chorus girls. I've had enough of this. I've had enough of the lot of you. You'll leave my house, all of you, every last one of you.

[*He makes a movement towards the bedroom.* PAT *stops him.*

PAT. [*Imploringly.*] No, no, not that, not after all I've done. There won't be any scandal. There won't be any fight. I'll get rid of 'em. [*She goes over to* DAN.] Why don't you leave us? What do you want me to do? What more do you want me to say? I love this man. He's everythin' to me. You're nothin' to me. Don't stand lookin' at me like that. Go! Go!

[MRS. O'BRIEN, *crying, goes towards the door to the hall.* DAN *looks at* PAT *who apparently defies him, then he leads* MRS. O'BRIEN *gently from the room. As the door closes* PAT *makes an impulsive move to follow them, then stops and breaks into heart-broken sobbing.* CRAWFORD *watches her, then, moved to sympathy, comes to her.*

CRAWFORD. You needn't mind about that money. You needn't pay.

PAT. [*Bitterly.*] I needn't pay? [*She turns on him furiously.*] I have paid with my good name, with my mother's trust. With the love of the man I've loved all my life. That's what I've paid to save my sister from you, you beast. I suppose you and your kind think when you take some poor devil of a girl starvin' for a little comfort, a minute or two a happiness, an' you make her a thing

that good women won't look at, I suppose you think your measly money pays. Pays for the homes you ruin, the mothers' hearts you break, the girls you send to hell. *You* pay! No, it's the woman that pays, and pays and pays.

[*She is sobbing in an hysterical rage as the curtain falls.*

THE FOURTH ACT

The parlour of a four-room flat in Harlem occupied by PAT *and* NORA. *It is characteristically "cheap," the woodwork is painted in an imitation golden oak, the wallpaper garish. It is a very small room; at the back is a door opening into the main hall of the building; on the right a door to the bedroom, on the left the opening to an alcove which serves as the dining-room. There are only a few articles of furniture in the room and these are plainly of the installment plan type. On the walls are numerous signed photographs of musical comedy favourites, and gaudily coloured "Art" reproductions. The room is in darkness. As the curtain rises a key is heard turning in the lock.* PAT *enters from the door to the hall. She is tired, dejected.* NORA, *wearing a simple house gown, enters from the dining-room.*

NORA. Hush!

PAT. Are they here?

NORA. Mom's waiting in there.

PAT. Where's Dan?

NORA. Gone to the hotel for Pop.

PAT. Did you beat 'em here?

NORA. Yes.

PAT. Gee, that was luck. I was scared green. [*She turns on the light.*] What'd you tell 'em?

NORA. What you said. I took sick before the show and had to come home.

PAT. Did they say anythin' about me?

NORA. Asked me if I knew where you were. I said I left you at the theatre.

PAT. That's good.

NORA. It's twelve o'clock. Where have you been?

PAT. [*Sitting wearily.*] Ridin' round on the "L" tryin' to get up nerve to face Pop. I'd 'a' given my eye teeth to a kept this from him. Too late now. Mom'll tell him everythin'.

NORA. [*Peevishly.*] Oh, if you hadn't hidden from Mom.

PAT. I got rattled.

NORA. [*Angrily.*] You had no business following me.

PAT. Lucky I did an' found you before it was too late.

NORA. You've only gotten yourself into trouble and haven't helped me.

PAT. 'Spose I thought I run any risk with Dan? 'Spose I thought for a minute he wouldn't trust me, wouldn't believe I was true an' good, no matter how appearances was against me?

NORA. Don't you think he'll make up?

PAT. I don't know nor I don't care. Serves me right. If I'd a kept my promise to Mom to watch over you 'stead of bein' so took up with my own business that I left you to run around with that Simpson woman, it all needn't have happened. I'm to blame an' I gotta pay for it.

NORA. How are we going to get the money for the note?

PAT. We'll save it outa what we earn.

NORA. You promised you'd get it from Dan.

PAT. Ask Dan Mallory for money? Ain't there any limit to what you want me to do for you? Ask him for money? I'd scrub floors first. I'm dead to the woild. Make me a cup of coffee, will you?

[NORA *goes out.* PAT *sits a moment in thought, then begins to cry softly.*

PAT. Oh, Dan, Dan!

[*There is a ring at the door bell.* PAT *starts to her feet.* MRS. O'BRIEN *enters from the bedroom.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Severely.*] So you've come home, have you? [PAT *is silent.* MRS. O'BRIEN *opens the door.* DAN *comes in.*] Oh, 'tis you, Dan. Where's O'Brien?

DAN. I couldn't find him. He hadn't been at the hotel.

PAT. Haven't you two seen Pop tonight?

DAN. No.

PAT. Then I want you both to promise me that you won't say nothin' to him of what you seen tonight. He'd only make a muss with Crawford. No good'll come a that.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Lave you an' that man to your carryin' on! No!

PAT. You keep quiet an' I'll promise never to see Crawford again. Don't you see I'm doin' this for Pop's sake? No need for him to know.

MRS. O'BRIEN. The kind of a girl you are.

PAT. [*Sadly.*] The kind of a girl I am. You'll promise. It's the last think I'll ever ask you, Mom. Say you will for his sake, for the sake a me that was dear to you once, *say* you won't tell.

[MRS. O'BRIEN *looks at her, then at* DAN. PAT *goes over quickly to* DAN.

PAT. Won't you promise? Are you goin' to tell?

DAN. Tell? Do you think I want to break your father's heart like you've broken mine?

MRS. O'BRIEN. An' you'll promise never to see Crawford again?

PAT. Yes, yes.

[MRS. O'BRIEN *looks helplessly at* DAN *who shows by a look that she must consent.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Then I won't tell.

PAT. That's fixed.

[*She turns to leave the room.*

DAN. [*Following.*] What lie are you goin' to frame up for your father?

PAT. I'll tell him it's all off with you an' me. That's no lie.

MRS. O'BRIEN. You'll have to think a somethin' better nor that to convince your father. He'll want some good reason for me takin' Nora home with me.

PAT. You're goin' to take Nora away from me?

MRS. O'BRIEN. It's high time she was out a this.

PAT. Then I ain't goin' to have no one. You don't think I'm fit to have my honey lamb around. You think I'd make my sister bad. Oh, my God! Oh, my God!

[*She leaves the room in a passion of tears.*

MRS. O'BRIEN. Dan. I almost misdoubt me own senses. It's hard to believe her bad. Oh, what's to become of her?

[*She sits and begins to cry.*

DAN. [*Going to her.*] You must take her home with you. You can't leave her here alone to be tempted again by that man. No one knows but you an' me?

MRS. O'BRIEN. But what if O'Brien's gone to Crawford's?

DAN. Crawford won't tell him. You heard him say he didn't want a row on his hands. You'll take her. Who'll stand by her if you won't?

MRS. O'BRIEN. She won't listen to me. [*She rises, and goes to* DAN.] Help me to persuade her. I've no one to lean on but you, boy. You'll have a talk with her?

DAN. Yes.

MRS. O'BRIEN. An' you won't leave me to face O'Brien alone?

DAN. [*Soothing her.*] Don't worry. It'll be all right.

MRS. O'BRIEN. God love you, Danny boy.

[*She goes into the bedroom.* DAN *stands looking after* MRS. O'BRIEN. NORA *enters hurriedly, excitedly.*

NORA. [*Indignantly.*] What's this about me going home? Pat says Mom's going to take me away.

DAN. She thinks it best.

NORA. [*Angrily.*] I don't want to go home. I can't live down on that farm now. I won't. No fun nor nothing. I've had enough to bear without being dragged into the country. Why, they've promised me a part in the next show. Besides, I ain't going to run away and have those girls gossiping about me. [DAN *turns to her.*] I'll get

even with Sylvia Simpson for getting me into this mess. Jealous cat!

DAN. Jealous? Of what?

NORA. Of everything. 'Cause I'm younger and prettier than she is. 'Cause I'm going to have the part she wanted. Talking about me to people.

DAN. She said you were at Crawford's room tonight.

NORA. I know. Sent Mom and Pop chasing after me.

DAN. Oh, you know that?

NORA. [*Flustered.*] Yes. Mom told me.

DAN. Your mother told you?

NORA. Yes, and that ain't the worst of it. Oh, Dan, we're in awful trouble.

DAN. What is it?

NORA. We—er—we—er——

DAN. Come on, if I'm to get you out of this I must know all about it.

NORA. I'll tell you, Dan, because I know you'll stand by us for Mom's sake.

DAN. Well?

NORA. We owe money and—and—Pat says we can save it out of what we earn. But how are we goin' to save three hundred dollars?

DAN. Three hundred dollars! Don't bother about it any more. I'll pay it for you.

NORA. That wouldn't do.

DAN. Why not?

NORA. I'd rather you'd give me the money.

DAN. Give you the money? How can you explain it to Pat?

NORA. She can't say anything if the note is paid.

DAN. The note?

NORA. Well, we had to raise money somehow. Pat promised she'd get it from you, but she won't now you've quarrelled.

DAN. How do you know we've quarrelled?

NORA. [*Lying.*] Pat told me.

DAN. All right. I'll give it to you.

NORA. Oh, Dan, you are good. You don't know what you've saved us from.

DAN. That's all right. I'd like to speak to Pat.

NORA. Oh, you'll spoil everything if you tell Pat.

DAN. Leave it to me. I'm only goin' to do what's right.

[NORA *goes.* DAN *stands pondering the information he has secured from* NORA. *He feels that* PAT'S *presence in* CRAWFORD'S *room is in some way connected with* NORA. PAT *enters.*

PAT. [*Coldly.*] Well?

DAN. Will you let me speak to you, please?

PAT. What can we have to say to each other now?

DAN. Nothin' about tonight. Let that go as it lays. I'd like to ask a favour of you.

PAT. What right——

DAN. [*Hastily.*] I've no rights now. But I want your help. Forget me in this. It's for your mother.

PAT. I guess she don't want nothin' from me, not love even.

DAN. She's been hard on you.

PAT. She thinks I gave her cause.

DAN. What do you think?

PAT. [*Bitterly.*] I ain't thinkin'. I don't care.

DAN. But I know there's nothin' you wouldn't do for her.

PAT. [*Sadly.*] That's right, though she doesn't seem wise to the fact.

DAN. She wants you to come home.

PAT. [*Joyfully.*] Come home with her! Why? [DAN *is confused.* PAT *smiles bitterly.*] Oh, I see. She can't trust me. She don't believe I'd keep my promise. An' all I've ever been to her don't count for nothin'.

DAN. No, no, she loves you. She's willin' to stand by you.

PAT. [*Indignantly.*] Then why doesn't she come to me an' say it herself? Why does she send you?

DAN. She thought you mightn't listen to her. She hoped

I could persuade you. That time's past. I see it's useless to plead with you. You won't say *yes?*

PAT. I can't go. What do you think I am? Go down home an' have you an' Mom overlookin' things, bein' sorry for me, kind to me. Not for mine, thank you.

DAN. No, I promise you we'll forget——

PAT. An' forgive. Wait till I ask it, will you?

DAN. Give me a reason why you don't do what your mother asks. I must tell her somethin'. Is it because you love Crawford?

PAT. [*Scornfully.*] Love him. Love *him!*

DAN. Then why?

PAT. Look here, what right have you to stand there givin' me the thoid degree? I can't go, and I won't go. And that settles it.

[*She starts to leave the room.*

DAN. Is it the money?

PAT. [*Surprised.*] The money?

DAN. Nora's told me. I'm going to pay the note.

PAT. You're goin' to pay Crawford?

DAN. Crawford! Then it is Crawford! Now I see. [*He rushes to the door to the bedroom.*] Mrs. O'Brien! Mrs. O'Brien!

[*Enter* MRS. O'BRIEN.

PAT. [*Despairingly.*] What are you goin' to do?

DAN. I'm goin' to show you up. I'm goin' to tell your mother the kind of a girl you are; tell her I know all about you an' Crawford; tell her that you didn't stop at any lengths to save your sister; that it was Nora who owed the money to Crawford, Nora who was in that room; tell her that I'm the biggest fool on earth, the lowest dog alive to doubt for one minute the girl I love, the girl who's too good for me, too good for any of us.

[*Much moved, he turns away.* MRS. O'BRIEN *goes quickly to* PAT.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Pat. Oh, my girl. [*There is a ring at*

the door bell.] 'Tis O'Brien. [DAN *opens the door. Enter* O'BRIEN.] Where have you been?

O'BRIEN. To Crawford's.

MRS. O'BRIEN. Why, the girls are here.

DAN. Nora was at home, in bed, asleep.

O'BRIEN. So! An' [*pointing to* PAT] where was she?

PAT. Where was I?

[*A pause.* DAN *and* MRS. O'BRIEN *indicate their fear that* CRAWFORD *has told everything to* O'BRIEN.

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Reassuringly.*] That talk of Nora and Crawford was gossip, the clatter of an idle tongue.

O'BRIEN. Was it? Then what's this? [*He shows a slip of paper crumpled in his hand. He goes to* PAT.] What's this? If it's idle talk, why won't this man Crawford see me? If it's gossip, how comes he to have a note for money I never had, an' signed by me? "Tell him I can't see him," that was his message by his man. "But that I send him a souvenir of my acquaintance with his daughter, an' that I'll thank him for the money." Well, girl, haven't you a tongue in your head? Who signed "P. O'Brien" to that paper? You dared to—use my name.

[*There is a pause.* PAT *is nonplussed.* DAN *comes to* O'BRIEN.

DAN. It's her own name.

O'BRIEN. What?

DAN. [*Taking the note.*] It's signed "P. O'Brien." Why shouldn't she sign it? Why shouldn't she get money from Crawford? It's owin' to me, an' what's mine's hers.

PAT. [*Tearfully.*] Oh, Dan.

DAN. Crawford an' me's had a run in. I've quit him an' he's sore tryin' to make trouble.

O'BRIEN. What would she be doin' with that amount a money?

DAN. That would be tellin'. That's our secret.

O'BRIEN. But——

MRS. O'BRIEN. [*Going to* O'BRIEN.] Mind your own

business, Patrick. It's the excitable man ye are, careerin' all over the town, an' us waitin' supper for ye.

O'BRIEN. [*He goes to* PAT.] Forgive me, girl. 'Twas all a mistake.

PAT. Forget it, Pop.

[*She kisses him.*

O'BRIEN. Where's Nora?

PAT. In the kitchen. [O'BRIEN *goes.*] Mom, be special kind to Nora. She's as good as gold.

MRS. O'BRIEN. God love you for the good girl ye are, and may HE forgive your ould mother.

[*She folds* PAT *in her arms, kisses her, then follows* O'BRIEN.

DAN. I'd like to say "Amen" to that. You'll come home with me now, Pat?

[PAT *goes smiling into* DAN'S *outstretched arms. She sighs and kisses him.*

PAT. Dan, we'll settle down like a couple of Reubens. Us an' the cows.

THE END

THE SHOW SHOP

A FARCICAL SATIRE IN FOUR ACTS

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

SADIE
WILBUR TOMPKINS
JEROME BELDEN
MAX ROSENBAUM
EFFIE BRINKLEY
JOHNNY BRINKLEY
MRS. DEAN
BETTINA DEAN
A NIGHT CLERK
MR. BILLINGS
GRANBY SMITH
A SCENE PAINTER
MAGINNIS
GOLDMAN
HICKSON
STEVE
MISS DONAHUE
MISS FARRINGTON
MISS TOBY
MONK
WALTERS

The Scenes of the play are laid in the office of MAX ROSENBAUM, New York City, the parlour of the Palace Hotel, Punxatawney, the stage of a Broadway Theatre and the appartment of JEROME BELDEN.

The action covers a period of time from August to October, a month intervening between the first and second acts, six weeks between the second and third, and fourteen hours between the third and fourth.

THE SHOW SHOP

Original cast, as first presented at the Hudson Theatre, New York, December 31, 1914.

It is arranged in the order in which the characters first appear.

SADIE	*Edna Aug*
WILBUR TOMPKINS	*Ned A. Sparks*
JEROME BELDEN	*Douglas Fairbanks*
MAX ROSENBAUM	*George Sidney*
EFFIE BRINKLEY	*Olive May*
JOHNNY BRINKLEY	*William Sampson*
MRS. DEAN	*Zelda Sears*
BETTINA DEAN	*Patricia Collinge*
A NIGHT CLERK	*Sam Coit*
MR. BILLINGS	*Stapleton Kent*
GRANBY SMITH	*Felix Krembs*
A SCENE PAINTER	*William Butler*
MAGINNIS	*Harry G. Bates*
GOLDMAN	*George Colt*
HICKSON	*Walter Young*
STEVE	*Charles Emerson*
MISS DONAHUE	*Lillian Tucker*
MISS FARRINGTON	*Rhy Alexander*
MISS TOBY	*Becky Bruce*
MONK	*Al Gilmore*
WALTERS	*Edward Moore*

THE SHOW SHOP

THE FIRST ACT

The private office, in a Broadway theatre building, of MAX ROSENBAUM, *theatrical manager. On the right of the room is a door opening on a hall that leads to a private entrance to the stage, on the left a door to the office of* ROSENBAUM'S *stage director,* WILBUR TOMPKINS, *and at the back another door to the outer offices and the waiting-room. At the left of the room are several chairs and a table on which stands a scenic artist's model of a stage setting, on the right a flat-topped desk and a swivel chair. Against the walls are filing cabinets and above them, encircling the room, is a row of framed "flashlights" of scenes from a* ROSENBAUM *production. In the most prominent position, over the centre door, is a large framed photograph of* ROSENBAUM. *Tacked to the walls are several "half-sheets" to be used in advertising* ROSENBAUM'S *forthcoming production, "The Wallop."*

It is eleven o'clock of a morning in August. On a bench in the waiting-room is the usual row of patient and eternally hopeful actors and actresses, seeking positions. They exchange greetings with SADIE, ROSENBAUM'S *secretary, as she comes through the waiting-room into the private office. She closes the door.*

SADIE *is pretty, quick-witted, clever-tongued, apparently bored with life yet incurably romantic. She takes a passionate interest in the affairs of the office, waging an eternal feud with* TOMPKINS, *the stage director; in fact, assuming a proprietary attitude toward the business, and, while admiring* ROSENBAUM *enormously, does*

not hesitate to criticise even him. She is carrying the morning's mail, several telegrams, a manuscript of a play and a set of "parts." As she moves about the room she sings a popular, sentimental ballad of the day.

SADIE. [*Singing.*] "You made me what I yam today——"

[*She picks up a newspaper, looks at it, smiles scornfully.* Has *she* got her picture in the paper *again?* [*She throws it down.*]

[*Singing.*] "I hope you're satisfied,
You dragged me down, and down and down,
That cannot be deny-ed."

[*Laying the parts on the desk.*

"I hope I've copied these parts all right, and now that we must part——

[*She slams the manuscript on the desk.*

I wish you all kinds of good luck.

[*Singing.*] " 'Tis the coise of an achin' heart,
'Tis the coise——"

[*The telephone bell rings sharply. She picks up the receiver.* Sure, I want it. 7776 Bryant. [*Wearily.*] 7-7-7-6 Bryant. [*Freezingly.*] I beg your pardon; I gave you the right number. [*She listens impatiently, then passionately exclaims.*] As Heaven is my judge, I gave you the right number. [*She waits.*] As woman to woman. [*She listens again, then grows furiously angry.*] Well, Madam, if you'll give me a chance I'll explain. I called up Central and said I wanted the box-office and wanted to speak to the Treasurer, please—— Yes, that's right—— Yeppie. Three sevens and a six. [*Laughs affectedly.*] Oh, that's all right, dearie. Yes, I'll hold it. [*She stands waiting, shifting from one foot to another, and changing the receiver from hand to hand. She sighs and perches on the end of the desk and, presently, to relieve the tedium, begins to sing the ballad again, emphasising its pathos.*] Hello. [*Crossly.*] Hello! [*Smiling coyly.*] Oh, is that you, Harry? This is Sadie. What did the manager say about

letting Mr. Rosenbaum have your stage for rehearsal today? From eleven till one? Much obliged. Say, Harry, I'd like a couple for tonight. Selling out! Is that so? Ah, go on, Harry, slip me a couple and mark 'em "Press." What! Take me home after the show? Sure, if anybody's got to stand on my feet in the subway I'd just as lief it'd be you, darling.

[*As she replaces the receiver* TOMPKINS, *a lean, lank individual of saturnine appearance, the incarnation of pessimism, enters from his office.*

TOMPKINS. Hello, Sadie! Have the scene models come?

SADIE. No.

TOMPKINS. Get on that phone to that scenic artist.

SADIE. Hello, give me 261 Greeley, and don't keep me waiting like the last time.

TOMPKINS. Give him my love and ask him how in thunder I'm going to put on a show without scenery.

SADIE. 261 Greeley? I'm speaking for Mr. Tompkins, Mr. Rosenbaum's stage manager.

TOMPKINS. [*Indignantly.*] Director! Director!

SADIE. What about those models for our new play, "The Wallop"? [*To* TOMPKINS.] Some title!

TOMPKINS. Some play!

SADIE. Mr. Rosenbaum thinks it's a masterpiece.

TOMPKINS. It's a mess.

SADIE. What? All right! [*To* TOMPKINS.] Be right over.

TOMPKINS. Got the script and parts ready?

SADIE. [*Giving him the manuscript and the parts.*] There's your copy. Take 'em away and chloroform 'em. I've had to copy the parts for this show, but you bet your life I'll never go to see it.

TOMPKINS. There's going to be a whole lot of people sidestep this. Where's the fourth act?

SADIE. Hasn't been handed in yet. I dread it.

TOMPKINS. Cheer up, sister; it can't be any worse than these.

SADIE. Well, if it is, it's going to make those three acts awful envious. Oh, here's a couple of letters for you.

TOMPKINS. [*Opening the letters.*] Where's Rosie?

SADIE. Over to K. & E.'s, battling for a route. [*She sings.*] "You made me what I yam today."

TOMPKINS. [*Wearily.*] Must you do that?

SADIE. I can't help it if I have an ear for music.

TOMPKINS. [*Reading the letter.*] Gillette's thrown up her part.

[*Disgusted, he throws the letter on the desk.*

SADIE. Isn't that the limit! I told Mr. Rosenbaum who to get for that part. She's coming in to see him today.

TOMPKINS. Who is she?

SADIE. Bettina Dean.

TOMPKINS. Huh!

SADIE. Best-looking girl that has been in this office this season.

TOMPKINS. Huh!

[*He reads the second letter.*

SADIE. The only thing that worries me is, if Mr. Rosenbaum doesn't like her, I'm afraid I'll have to play the part myself.

TOMPKINS. You hate yourself, don't you? This letter means we lose Gilmore, too.

[*He throws it on the desk.*

SADIE. Are Gillette and Gilmore married?

TOMPKINS. Yes, poor Gilmore.

SADIE. What was he going to play? Who is he, anyhow?

TOMPKINS. Some truck-driver Rosie engaged to play a man about town.

SADIE. Lucky it's a small part. So hard to get leading men. All of them dancing at the cabarets.

TOMPKINS. [*Going.*] Time some of the bluffs in this business were doing something.

SADIE. There are a lot of actors waiting out there to see you.

TOMPKINS. Actors! There are none.

SADIE. What'll I do?

TOMPKINS. Get rid of 'em.

SADIE. How?

TOMPKINS. Tell 'em I'm dead.

SADIE. That's going to keep them happy all day.

[TOMPKINS *turns, glares at* SADIE, *then goes into his office, slamming the door.* SADIE *is laughing when the door from the waiting-room is thrown open and a breezy, good-looking type of the wealthy American youth of today comes in hurriedly. It is* JEROME BELDEN. SADIE *rises majestically, walks over to him and points to the letters on the door.*

SADIE. "Private" isn't painted on the other side of the door just to make it look stylish.

JEROME. I'm looking for Mr. Rosenbaum.

SADIE. That doesn't give you any license to crowd your personality into his private office.

JEROME. I'm sorry. I saw the door open and just blew in.

SADIE. The wind's shifted; blow out.

[*She turns away.*

JEROME. [*Following her.*] I want to see Mr. Rosenbaum.

SADIE. You want to see an oculist. There's a sign out there—"No Vacancies for Actors."

JEROME. I'm not an actor. I'm a business man.

SADIE. What's a business man doing in a theatrical office? Who are you?

JEROME. Jerome Belden.

SADIE. Jerome Belden! That's a swell name, but it means nothing in my young life. Did you have an appointment?

JEROME. No, but I must see him.

SADIE. [*Sarcastically.*] Sorry, but he isn't in.

[*She moves to the chair at the desk.*

JEROME. When will he be back?

SADIE. When he returns, fair stranger.

JEROME. Don't you keep tabs on Mr. Rosenbaum?

SADIE. I'm his stenographer, not his wife.

JEROME. Oh! Has Miss Dean been here?

SADIE. What Miss Dean?

JEROME. Bettina Dean!

SADIE. I'm not allowed to divulge office secrets.

[*She sits.*

JEROME. [*Offering a bill.*] Here.

SADIE. [*Waving it aside.*] Nothing doing.

JEROME. [*Smiling.*] Oh, go on, run up to Huyler's.

SADIE. [*Taking it.*] That's different. Mother told me I was never to take money from a strange gentleman. But, gee, none of the fellows I know have any.

JEROME. [*Sitting across from her.*] Let's get down to cases. Have you ever seen Miss Dean?

SADIE. Best-looking girl that has been in this office this season.

JEROME. [*Offering another bill.*] Go on, get another box.

SADIE. One box a day is my limit.

JEROME. Look here, have you ever been in love?

SADIE. [*Sighing.*] It's chronic with me.

JEROME. That's the way I feel about Miss Dean. I want you to help me.

SADIE. I'm no first aid to stage-door Johnnies.

JEROME. Johnnies? I want to marry her.

SADIE. What? My, how romantic!

JEROME. I want her to marry me and give up the stage. Her mother can't see that at all. I heard last night that Mr. Rosenbaum is to see her today. If she gets this engagement it's all off.

SADIE. Oh, I see. [*Sympathetically.*] Then you'll be parted.

JEROME. Now you see what we're up against.

SADIE. Isn't real life just like the stage?

JEROME. Now come on; be a good fellow. Tell me, has she been here?

SADIE. Not yet. Her appointment's for twelve today.

JEROME. Good! [*He rises and goes to the door.*] That gives me a chance to see her before she gets here. Say,

what's your favourite brand of flower? [SADIE *smiles.*] No? Well, I'm just going to smother you in violets.

[*He leaves hurriedly.*

SADIE. [*Wistfully.*] Some girls have all the luck.

[TOMPKINS *bursts in from his office.*

TOMPKINS. Where's that script?

SADIE. I gave it to you once; if you're going to mislay it like that I'll put a bell on it.

[*She rises and gives the manuscript to him.*

TOMPKINS. What was it I wanted to ask you?

SADIE. How should I know? I'm no mind-reader.

TOMPKINS. Can the persiflage. Oh, yes, what theatre did Rosie get for rehearsal today?

SADIE. You can have the stage downstairs from eleven till one.

[MAX ROSENBAUM, *a jovial embodiment of his race, enters briskly from the outer office. He carries a theatrical "route" book.*

SADIE. Good morning, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. Hello, Sadie. [*To* TOMPKINS.] Hello, Sunshine. We've got to slam this show through. We open in two weeks. Sadie, has the printer sent the proof of that three-sheet?

SADIE. It's right outside.

ROSENBAUM. Bring it in.

[SADIE *goes.*

TOMPKINS. Get a good route?

ROSENBAUM. A pippin!

[*He opens the book.*

TOMPKINS. [*Sarcastically.*] Well, what burgs did you horn out of them?

ROSENBAUM. [*Reading.*] We open in Toronto, jump to Washington——

TOMPKINS. Jump! It's a leap!

ROSENBAUM. Yes, but if I can get the President to see the show.

TOMPKINS. What have you got against Wilson?

ROSENBAUM. I'll get him to endorse it.

TOMPKINS. Why should he?

ROSENBAUM. Didn't I vote for him?

TOMPKINS. Where do we scatter after Washington?

ROSENBAUM. Montreal, then Wilmington, Schenectady, Hartford, Rochester, New Haven, Troy and Punxatawney.

TOMPKINS. Just hitting the high places. What are you doing, booking "The Wallop" with a ouija board?

ROSENBAUM. And a week in Philadelphia.

TOMPKINS. This is a healthy show to wake up Philadelphia.

ROSENBAUM. Say it will wake 'em up so hard, it'll give 'em insomnia.

[*He places the route book on the desk.* SADIE *enters, carrying a roll of paper.*

SADIE. Here's the proof of that three-sheet.

ROSENBAUM. Here, Sadie, stand up. [ROSENBAUM *places a chair.* SADIE *stands on it and holds up the three-sheet.* ROSENBAUM *reads.*] "Max Rosenbaum politely proffers 'The Wallop,' by Edgerton Porter, staged under the direction of Max Rosenbaum and Wilbur Tompkins."

TOMPKINS. [*Satirically.*] Couldn't you work your monicker in some place else?

ROSENBAUM. I might make it, "By Max Rosenbaum and——" [TOMPKINS *laughs.*] Well, I gave the author the idea and a lot of the dialogue.

TOMPKINS. Why pay him royalties? Why didn't you write it yourself?

ROSENBAUM. I haven't time to do the hack work. Sadie, tell the printer to put Max on one line and Rosenbaum on the other, and cut down the size of the author's name. Who is he, anyway?

[SADIE, *agreeing, goes.*

[ROSENBAUM *puts on his office-coat, then sits, reading his mail.*

TOMPKINS. Got a minute?

ROSENBAUM. I haven't a thing to do but listen to your troubles. What's on your mind?

TOMPKINS. [*Sitting.*] Oh, nothing! First rehearsal at eleven, no last act, no scenery, no leading woman——

ROSENBAUM. Gillette quit?

TOMPKINS. [*Sarcastically.*] She's ill.

[*He hands* ROSENBAUM *a letter.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Reading it.*] She'd had a better offer.

TOMPKINS. It's like her to wait till the first rehearsal.

ROSENBAUM. I was afraid she'd throw us down. I've got just the girl. I told her that if anything happened to Gillette, I'd give her the first chance. I've an appointment with her today at twelve.

[*He presses the buzzer on his desk.*

TOMPKINS. [*Handing* ROSENBAUM *the other letter.*] Gilmore's quit, too.

ROSENBAUM. [*Reading.*] Well, you didn't like him. What kind of a type do you want?

TOMPKINS. He ought to look like a clubman, wear his clothes well. He sings a song in the first act, dances a tango——

ROSENBAUM. For sixty dollars a week, you want a cross between John Drew, Caruso and Vernon Castle. That's easy! [SADIE *rushes in.*] Sadie, telephone Miss Dean, over to the St. Agnes: tell her not to wait until twelve o'clock, but to come right over.

SADIE. [*Disconsolately.*] Right over?

ROSENBAUM. Yes, and make out a couple of contracts and leave the salary blank.

[SADIE *rushes out.*

TOMPKINS. Is it Bettina Dean?

ROSENBAUM. Yes.

TOMPKINS. Oh, Lord!

ROSENBAUM. What is it?

TOMPKINS. Has a mother, hasn't she?

ROSENBAUM. Must have had a father, too. What's the matter with mother?

TOMPKINS. If Mamma Dean is going to be on this job, you won't want a stage manager for this show, you'll want a lion tamer.

[*He goes into his office.* SADIE *enters.*

SADIE. Mr. and Mrs. Brinkley calling.

ROSENBAUM. Show 'em in, show 'em in. Come in, Effie.

EFFIE. [*Entering.*] Well, Rosie? [SADIE *goes.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Shaking hands.*] Where's Johnny?

EFFIE. Somewhere in the rear. That man's always leaving Buffalo just as I'm pulling into the Grand Central.

JOHNNY. [*Entering.*] Who are you knocking now?

ROSENBAUM. [*Shaking hands.*] Well, well, Johnny!

[EFFIE BRINKLEY *is a plump, pretty, jolly woman of thirty-five, her bleached hair, too youthful hat, and gown, indicating clearly the passé soubrette. Her husband,* JOHNNY, *a small, spare man in the fifties, has the gloomy manner and dejected appearance that is so often characteristic of the comedian in private life.*

ROSENBAUM. Here, sit down, sit down.

EFFIE. Didn't I tell you he'd be the same old Rosie?

ROSENBAUM. Why not?

JOHNNY. You're a great manager, now.

ROSENBAUM. Anybody who's had one success is a great manager.

[EFFIE *and* JOHNNY *sit.* ROSENBAUM *gets a box of cigars.*

EFFIE. Johnny didn't want to come.

ROSENBAUM. [*Reproachfully.*] Johnny and you knew me when I——

JOHNNY. I never bank on that "I knew him when" thing.

[*He takes a cigar.*

EFFIE. The sight of you, Rosie, takes me back to 'Frisco.

JOHNNY. Remember that joint we all lived in?

ROSENBAUM. The House of a Thousand Prunes.

[*They laugh.* ROSENBAUM *sits at his desk.*

EFFIE. My, but five years makes a big difference in this business!

ROSENBAUM. Effie, you don't look a day older.

EFFIE. It's my grand new liquid rouge.

JOHNNY. And I just paid three dollars to regild her dome.

ROSENBAUM. How's the world using you?

JOHNNY. We're still among the deserving poor.

ROSENBAUM. Where have you been keeping yourself?

EFFIE. Hiding out in the alfalfa.

ROSENBAUM. You ought to be on Broadway.

JOHNNY. We haven't a look-in. I haven't that sex appeal.

EFFIE. Isn't it funny some New York manager doesn't take a violent fancy to Johnny?

JOHNNY. Hush, Effie, you make me feel like an abandoned woman.

ROSENBAUM. What can I do for you?

EFFIE. Well, a couple of jobs would come in handy.

JOHNNY. Anything in this play you're putting on?

ROSENBAUM. I'll see, Johnny. [*He looks at the "cast sheet" on his desk.*] There's a bit in the last act.

JOHNNY. One of those bad butlers?

ROSENBAUM. No, a chauffeur.

EFFIE. Anything for me? We always go together. He's too darn attractive to leave lying around loose.

ROSENBAUM. There's a housekeeper. But, oh, you couldn't afford to play them.

EFFIE The only thing an actor can't afford to be is idle.

JOHNNY. We're eating on the last link of my gold watch and chain. What do they pay?

ROSENBAUM. Hold fast.

JOHNNY. [*Clutching his chair.*] Spring it!

ROSENBAUM. Seventy-five dollars for the two of them.

JOHNNY. [*Gasping.*] Air! I want air!

ROSENBAUM. I tell you what: we'll make it a hundred. [*He presses the buzzer.*

EFFIE. Now, Rosie, we don't want to work you.

ROSENBAUM. What's money between friends? [SADIE *bustles in.*] Sadie, make out a contract for Effie and John Brinkley at One Hundred. [*To* EFFIE.] I'll mail it to you.

SADIE. Mrs. Dean and Miss Dean are waiting to see you.

ROSENBAUM. When I ring, show them in. [SADIE *goes.*]

EFFIE. Is Betty Dean to be in the company?

ROSENBAUM. I'm figuring on her for the lead. Do you know her?

EFFIE. Know her? Many's the two weeks' notice her mother and I have read off the same call-board. Haven't seen her for years until she turned up this summer.

ROSENBAUM. Can the girl act?

EFFIE. She should if she's anything like her mother, Matilda Kent. You've heard of her. Used to play leading business.

JOHNNY. I thought that Betty was going to marry that young fellow who's been hanging around.

EFFIE. Oh, no; he insists that Betty give up the stage. Matilda gave up a big career to marry. She won't let Betty make the same mistake.

JOHNNY. Jerry is one of the idle rich, but he's a nice kid.

EFFIE. Yes, but when you think of the late Mr. Dean, you can't blame Matilda for being something of a pessimist when it comes to love. She's devoted her life to Betty and she's determined to get her on Broadway.

JOHNNY. Then no man, woman or child will stop her. She's some warrior, is Matilda.

ROSENBAUM. Johnny, you're throwing an awful scare into me.

EFFIE. Don't mind Johnny. He always was an artist with a hammer. I like Matilda. You take Betty. She's a find for some manager. Where are the parts?

ROSENBAUM. Here.

[EFFIE *and* JOHNNY *rise.* ROSENBAUM *hands a part of two "sides" to* EFFIE *and another of three "sides" to* JOHNNY. *They look at them, then at* ROSENBAUM, *who smiles apologetically.*

EFFIE. All of this?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, that's all right, Effie, you can build it up.

EFFIE. Are you engaging me as an actress or an architect?

JOHNNY. Cheer up, Effie; if anyone in the audience winks, they'll miss me.

EFFIE. Where are we rehearsing?

ROSENBAUM. We're using the stage downstairs. You can go out that way.

[*He indicates the door at the right of the room.*

EFFIE. Good-bye, Rosie.

[*She shakes hands and starts to go.*

JOHNNY. [*Shaking hands.*] Rosie, you've been immense to us.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, that's all right.

EFFIE. Come over to see us.

ROSENBAUM. Sure.

JOHNNY. We'll have some prunes.

[JOHNNY *and* EFFIE *leave.* ROSENBAUM *pushes the buzzer and then, sitting at the desk, assumes a managerial attitude, affecting to be very busy in order to impress* MRS. DEAN *and* BETTY, *who are shown in by* SADIE. MRS. DEAN *is a woman of fifty, shrewd, capable, dominated by one idea only, and that the furthering of her daughter's success on the stage; in a word, the typical "stage mother," the terror of managers and the despair of stage directors. Her nondescript bonnet and her shabby blue serge suit are in striking contrast to the exquisitely charming attire of her daughter,* BETTINA, *a very pretty girl of twenty, who bows shyly to* ROSENBAUM, *on whom her mother advances with an air of grim determination.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] Good morning, Miss Dean, Mrs. Dean. Sit down, please. [*They sit.*] Well, Miss Dean, are you at liberty to consider an offer?

MRS. DEAN. [*Interposing.*] That depends.

ROSENBAUM. What did you do last season?

BETTY. I played Mary Turner in "Within the Law."

MRS. DEAN. She was the original, in the number 13 company.

BETTY. Oh, I hope it isn't another crook. I'm so sick of crime.

ROSENBAUM. There isn't a crook in the play.

MRS. DEAN. Why, Mr. Rosenbaum, what a daring departure!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, I've got a novelty.

MRS. DEAN. Don't tell me you've found a playwright with a new idea!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, no; everything in it has been done a thousand times, but it's got a new twist and a good religious punch.

MRS. DEAN. [*Complacently.*] Betty was wonderful in "The Christian."

BETTY. What sort of a part is this?

ROSENBAUM. Pathos, comedy, emotion, the whole bunch of tricks. Do you think you can handle it?

MRS. DEAN. Mere child's play for Betty?

BETTY. [*Protesting.*] Oh, Mother!

ROSENBAUM. [*Drily.*] You're not at all prejudiced.

MRS. DEAN. [*Taking press notices from her bag.*] Mr. Rosenbaum, I don't ask you to take a mother's word for her daughter's ability. Listen: [*Reading.*] "The comedy of a Mrs. Fiske, the emotion of a Duse, the grace of a Pavlowa and the charm of an Ethel Barrymore." That's a slight tribute to Betty from the Oscaloosa *Eagle*. The Waco *Argus* says——

BETTY. Oh, mother, Mr. Rosenbaum doesn't want to hear my press notices.

[*She rises, embarrassed, and moves away.*

MRS. DEAN. I'm only trying to prove to Mr. Rosenbaum that you can act circles around any of these Broadway favourites.

ROSENBAUM. Broadway doesn't want acting.

MRS. DEAN. [*Beaming.*] Mr. Rosenbaum, it's a pleasure to meet a manager who knows the New York public.

[*She rises and sits across the desk from* ROSENBAUM.

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] Mrs. Dean, has she any personality?

MRS. DEAN. That, perhaps, is Betty's greatest charm.

ROSENBAUM. Has she any mannerisms? They like them, too.

MRS. DEAN. She's full of mannerisms.

ROSENBAUM. [*Shaking hands across the desk.*] You're a woman after my own heart. What's her salary?

MRS. DEAN. Two hundred dollars a week and her clothes.

[ROSENBAUM *draws his hand away quickly as if stung.* BETTY, *who has wandered to the other side of the room, turning quickly in surprise, meets the warning look of* MRS. DEAN.

ROSENBAUM. For an unknown actress?

MRS. DEAN. Unknown! I've never noticed your portrait in any Hall of Fame.

ROSENBAUM. I'll give you one hundred dollars.

MRS. DEAN. [*Rising.*] Betty, wasn't that appointment with Mr. Belasco for today?

ROSENBAUM. [*Laughing.*] Belasco! Now we've both had our little joke. Let's talk business; one hundred dollars.

MRS. DEAN. Quite a comedian, aren't you?

ROSENBAUM. I'm sorry. Maybe we can do business some other time. [BETTY *comes toward* MRS. DEAN. ROSENBAUM *"sizes" her up.*] Well, what do you say to one hundred and twenty-five? It's a great part.

[MRS. DEAN'S *back is toward* ROSIE. *She smiles triumphantly at* BETTY, *then turns to* ROSENBAUM *with gracious dignity.*

MRS. DEAN. I hope you get someone to play it. Come, Betty.

[*They start to go.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Following them.*] One hundred and fifty, [MRS. DEAN *turns*] but you buy the clothes.

MRS. DEAN. [*Suspiciously.*] Will we come into New York?

ROSENBAUM. Worse plays have.

MRS. DEAN. [*All smiling graciousness.*] Betty, dear, how would you like to work for Mr. Rosenbaum?

BETTY. [*Indifferently.*] I'd just as soon.

MRS. DEAN. Well, as Betty feels so strongly about it, I'll take it.

ROSENBAUM. Before I engage her, I'd like to have her read a speech or two.

MRS. DEAN. Certainly.

BETTY. Oh, I couldn't.

ROSENBAUM. I've got to get some idea of what you can do before I sign you up.

MRS. DEAN. It's the nervousness of the artist. She inherits it. I felt exactly the same way when I had to read the Portia speech for dear Mr. Booth. [*With a gesture, reciting.*] "The quality of mercy is not strained."

ROSENBAUM. [*Stopping her.*] It's your daughter I'm engaging.

MRS. DEAN. [*Roguishly.*] Ah, yes, of course. [*She giggles.*] If you give Betty a moment to look it over.

ROSENBAUM. Sure. Take this speech.

[*He hands* MRS. DEAN *a part and goes into the waiting-room.* MRS. DEAN *turns joyously to* BETTY.

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Betty, my darling, you're going to get your chance; you're going to be on Broadway.

BETTY. Maybe I can't play the part.

MRS. DEAN. Matilda Kent's daughter can play anything!

BETTY. But for $150 he'll expect so much of me.

MRS. DEAN. My dear, the more a manager pays you the better he thinks you are. [*She looks over the part.*] This speech isn't bad, but I'll see that it's rewritten to give you something to get your teeth in.

[*She hands the part to* BETTY, *then, crossing to the desk, picks up first act of the manuscript of the play.* BETTY *sits wearily at the left of the room.*

BETTY. What's it about?

MRS. DEAN. Never mind what it's about. When you read it, just fix your thoughts on something sad.

BETTY. I'll think of poor, dear Jerry.

MRS. DEAN. [*Drily.*] Yes. Now, about the clothes. [*She looks at the first page of the manuscript.*] Four acts! That means four dresses.

BETTY. How will we get them?

MRS. DEAN. We've got to get them. I'll make them.

BETTY. [*Rising, goes to her.*] Oh, Mother, I'm so tired of seeing you work yourself to death for me. I'm ashamed of going around dressed like this and you so dingy.

[*She puts her head on her mother's shoulder.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Embracing her.*] You just wait, my dear, until you make your big success! Then watch mother flounder around in the lap of luxury.

BETTY. [*Drawing away.*] But we needn't wait. I could give you everything you wanted, if you'd let me marry Jerry.

MRS. DEAN. Now, Betty, you've known Jerry only two months. We won't discuss that infatuation again.

BETTY. It's not infatuation. It's love. And he says I'm "the love of his life."

MRS. DEAN. That's a mossy old line.

BETTY. It sounds convincing the way he says it.

[*She moves away.*

MRS. DEAN. It sounded convincing when your father said it. [*She goes to* BETTY.] Oh, Betty, I've nothing against Jerry, but when I was your age I was swept off my feet just like this. I don't want you to make my mistake. All I ask of you is to wait until you've had a taste of success; then, if you want to give it up, that will be a horse of another colour. *Now,* where's that speech? [*She takes the part.*] See, Betty, tears in your voice there, look wistfully here, make your lips quiver. Trick it.

BETTY. Oh, I'm sick of the tricks of the trade. I don't want to act.

[*She throws the part on the table.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Reproachfully.*] If you felt all this about the stage, why didn't you tell me? You knew I was only living for the day to see you take a curtain call on Broadway, living only for that one thrill of mother's pride. I've never forced you to do anything you didn't want to do, and I won't now. You're free to make your choice.

BETTY. [*Turning to her.*] I'm not free to make my choice. [*She throws her arms around her mother.*] I love you. You know I do. No girl ever had a better mother. Do you think I want to disappoint you? But I love Jerry, too. Oh, what can I do?

[*She is at the point of tears,* MRS. DEAN *at her wits' end, when they are interrupted by the return of* ROSENBAUM *with the contracts.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, are you ready? Are you set?

MRS. DEAN. [*Bewildered.*] Why — Mr. Rosenbaum— I——

[BETTY *turns, sees the disappointment in her mother's eyes, then, sighing, picks up the part, takes a few steps toward* ROSENBAUM, *who is seated at the desk, and begins to read, her mother watching anxiously the effect on him.*

BETTY. [*Reading.*] "I've been lonely, too, Mr. Craig— lonelier than you, for you've had your son, and for years I've had no one who really belonged to me. I've tried to forget that loneliness with the thought that some day this wandering would be over, that some day I'd have a home, a husband, and now you want to take the man I love away from me."

[*The concluding lines are so applicable to her own situation that she is overcome and, throwing herself into the chair, buries her head in her arms and breaks into wild sobs.* MRS. DEAN, *understanding, goes to her quickly, but* ROSENBAUM, *thinking it a bit of*

acting, jumps to his feet excitedly and claps his hands in applause.

ROSENBAUM. Great! Great! You've got the sob stuff all right. Here's your contract; one hundred and fifty dollars.

[*He holds out the pen to* BETTY, *who continues to cry.* MRS. DEAN *is torn between her joy at the offer and her fear that* BETTY *will refuse it. There is a pause.* ROSENBAUM *looks at them bewildered.*

Aren't you going to sign it?

MRS. DEAN. Why, I don't know.

ROSENBAUM. Here you are, Miss Dean.

[BETTY *looks at her mother, who is watching her with tears in her eyes.* BETTY *braces up, walks across to the chair, sits at the desk and takes a pen.* MRS. DEAN *gives a sigh of relief, goes to the table and gets the part.*

ROSENBAUM. Hadn't you better read the contracts?

BETTY. [*Signing them.*] They're all alike. If you want me you'll keep me.

MRS. DEAN. Yes. It was a wise man who said that a theatrical contract was an evidence of mutual distrust.

[BETTY *gives one contract to her mother, who looks it over, verifies it, then folds it and puts it in her bag.*

BETTY. Where is the rehearsal?

ROSENBAUM. Downstairs—this way.

[*He opens the door that leads to the stage.* BETTY *starts to go, but* MRS. DEAN, *victorious, resumes her aggressive mood.* TOMPKINS *comes in, unobserved.*

MRS. DEAN. I suppose your stage manager is the ususal fiend in human form.

ROSENBAUM. [*Turning, sees* TOMPKINS.] Here he is. Mrs. Dean, Miss Dean, Mr. Tompkins. I think you'll find him amiable.

MRS. DEAN. We shall see.

[*She looks at* TOMPKINS *coldly, then strides haughtily*

to the door. BETTY *smiles shyly at them as she follows her mother out of the room.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Excitedly.*] Well, what do you think about the little lady?

TOMPKINS. I'm not worrying about the little lady; it's the old lady who's got me winging.

[SADIE *enters, wearing a large bunch of violets.*

SADIE. Here are the Brinkley contracts.

TOMPKINS. Rosie, come out and take a flash at these scene models.

ROSENBAUM. What's wrong?

TOMPKINS. Everything!

[*He slams into his office.*

ROSENBAUM. Sadie, I'd rather have a thousand dollars than that man's disposition.

[*He wearily follows* TOMPKINS. SADIE *places the* BRINKLEY *contracts on the desk and is about to return to the outer office when* JEROME BELDEN *rushes in.*

JERRY. I missed her! Has she been here?

SADIE. Yes.

JERRY. Has Mr. Rosenbaum seen her?

SADIE. Yes.

JERRY. Where is she?

SADIE. I think she's downstairs, rehearsing.

JERRY. He's engaged her?

SADIE. I'm afraid so.

JERRY. Then I've got to see Mr. Rosenbaum. Where is he?

SADIE. He's busy.

JERRY. Very well. I'll wait.

[SADIE *goes.* JERRY *is sitting at the desk when* TOMPKINS, *coming in, sees him, stops and clutches* ROSENBAUM, *who is following him.*

TOMPKINS. [*In a hoarse whisper.*] Look! For the man about town. Pay him anything. He's it. Heaven has heard my prayer.

ROSENBAUM. God's good to His chosen.

[*He runs over past* JERRY *to his chair at the desk.* TOMPKINS *brings a chair and places it so as to block the way should* JERRY *try to leave.* JERRY, *seeing them, rises.*

JERRY. Mr. Rosenbaum?

ROSENBAUM. Yes, yes. [JERRY *offers his card.* ROSENBAUM *takes it.*] Well, young man, do you sing?

JERRY. [*Bewildered.*] A little. Why?

ROSENBAUM. What's your voice?

JERRY. [*More bewildered.*] Why—I don't know.

TOMPKINS. That's all right. He can talk the song.

ROSENBAUM. Do you tango?

JERRY. A little, but isn't it——

TOMPKINS. That's all right; he can fake it. How about the uniform?

ROSENBAUM. Stand up, please.

JERRY. [*Rising.*] Really——

ROSENBAUM. He can let down the pants. Can you act at all?

JERRY. No.

TOMPKINS. I'm glad you realise it.

ROSENBAUM. [*Pushes buzzer.*] All right, Mr. Belden. I'll give you seventy-five dollars a week. [SADIE *enters.* ROSENBAUM *gives her* JERRY'S *card.*] Here, Sadie, make out a contract for seventy-five dollars. Come back this afternoon. Take him, Tompkins.

[*He rises.* TOMPKINS *advances, seizes* JERRY *by the arm, and is starting to drag him toward the door to the stage when* JERRY *throws him off.*

JERRY. Wait a minute. Damn it, I tell you I'm not an actor.

TOMPKINS. Didn't you come here about a part?

JERRY. No. I came here to see him on business.

ROSENBAUM. Well, why didn't you say so?

JERRY. I didn't get a chance.

TOMPKINS. [*Bitterly.*] Everybody's hand's against me.

[*To* ROSIE.] Send up to the Winter Garden and get me one of those men about town.

[*He goes into his office.* SADIE *bursts into laughter, which* ROSENBAUM *resents.*

ROSENBAUM. Sadie, no laughing in business hours. [SADIE *goes.*] What do you want to see me about?

JERRY. A matter of business.

ROSENBAUM. Are you an architect?

JERRY. No.

ROSENBAUM. Someone's always trying to wish a New York theatre on me. What is it?

JERRY. [*Threateningly.*] You're coming between me and the woman I love.

ROSENBAUM. What? Who is she?

JERRY. Bettina Dean.

ROSENBAUM. [*Frightened.*] I've only seen the woman twice.

JERRY. That was enough.

ROSENBAUM. I didn't say half a dozen words to her.

[JERRY *comes toward the desk. A chair is in his way; he throws it aside violently and leans over the desk, his doubled fist within an inch of* ROSENBAUM'S *nose.* ROSENBAUM *is terrified.*

JERRY. You're deliberately ruining her life's happiness.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising indignantly.*] It isn't so. Her mother was in this office all the time.

JERRY. Oh, I don't mean that.

[*He turns away.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, what in blazes do you mean? Talking of life's happiness and women you love like a—like a problem play.

JERRY. You thought I meant that she was in love with you? [*He laughs.*] With you? [*He laughs.*] That's funny. She wouldn't look at *you.*

ROSENBAUM. Is that so! See these grey hairs? That's what I get for being fascinating to women.

[ROSENBAUM *sits at the right of the desk.* JERRY *brings a chair and sits across from him.*

JERRY. Betty 'phoned me this morning. Said you'd sent for her. Now what do you want to butt in like a fat-head——

ROSENBAUM. One of us is nutty!

JERRY. Betty says this means good-bye.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] Come on; let's you and me go up to Matteawan.

JERRY. [*Rising.*] No, sit down.

[*He tries to push* ROSENBAUM *into the chair.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Placing both hands on* JERRY'S *arms.*] Just a minute. Give me a chance to duck when you throw it.

JERRY. Throw what?

ROSENBAUM. The bomb.

JERRY. Sit down. I haven't any bomb. Let's talk money.

[*He sits.*

ROSENBAUM. Money? He's got a lucid interval. Have you got money?

JERRY. Lots of it.

ROSENBAUM. Excuse me a minute. [*He rushes up to the door, opens it and calls.*] Sadie!

SADIE. [*Outside.*] What?

ROSENBAUM. Go to lunch.

SADIE. [*Outside.*] All right!

[ROSENBAUM *stands for an instant, looking at* JERRY *speculatively, then, smiling, brings a chair and places it beside him.*

JERRY. Now, I don't know anything about this theatrical business.

ROSENBAUM. Don't let that stop you from going into it. There's a mint in it for the right fellow.

JERRY. I don't want to go into it.

ROSENBAUM. [*Disappointed.*] Oh!

[*He sits.*

JERRY. Now I want to fix up a deal with you. How much do you want? Write your own ticket.

ROSENBAUM. Come on; we'll begin all over again. [*They rise.* ROSENBAUM *takes* JERRY'S *hand, shakes it effusively.*] How do you do, Mr. Belden?

JERRY. How do you do, Mr. Rosenbaum? Oh, sit down!

[*They sit.*

ROSENBAUM. Now, there's you and Miss Dean and me and a deal and some money you want to force on me.

JERRY. I want to marry Bettina Dean.

ROSENBAUM. If you want to commit suicide, I'm not stopping you.

JERRY. Why? Haven't you engaged her?

ROSENBAUM. Sure! She's signed the contract.

JERRY. [*Dejectedly.*] That settles it.

ROSENBAUM. [*Surprised.*] How?

JERRY. We could have been married if you hadn't given her this engagement. I wanted her to give up the stage. Betty is willing, but Mrs. Dean won't hear of it until Betty's had her chance in New York. We've promised to wait. Now, what'll you take to fire her?

ROSENBAUM. What good will that do?

JERRY. We can get married. Don't you see, no other New York manager wants her.

ROSENBAUM. My God, have I got a lemon and a lion tamer?

[*He rises.*

JERRY. [*Following him.*] Oh, Betty can act, all right.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, can she? Well, you can get a wife anywhere, but where'll I get a leading woman?

JERRY. You've never been crazy about a girl.

ROSENBAUM. Worse than that! I've married 'em—three of 'em. One was a leading woman, one was a heavy woman, and one was an ongenoo. She was the business woman. She gets alimony.

JERRY. No use appealing to you for sympathy. You're soured on married life.

ROSENBAUM. Not at all. You've got my sympathy. I know what it is. These ongenoos do get you.

JERRY. This one has got me, you bet.

[ROSENBAUM *and* JERRY *are standing side by side, lost in thought.* ROSENBAUM *looks at him sympathetically.*

ROSENBAUM. Honest, if I'd known, I'd have been tempted to help you. [*He pauses as if struck with an idea.*] Look here, have you ever acted?

JERRY. I've fluffed around in college plays.

ROSENBAUM. Why don't you take this part of the man about town. I'll give you *thirty* dollars a week.

JERRY. That won't be necessary.

ROSENBAUM. Well, come on and take it.

JERRY. I couldn't act.

ROSENBAUM. Anybody can act. You'd be in the company with Miss Dean, see her every day, dance a tango with her every night.

JERRY. I couldn't go on the stage. My friends would josh the life out of me.

[*Their argument is interrupted by the entrance of* MRS. DEAN, *followed by* BETTY.

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Rosenbaum, that man Tompkins is simply impossible. He—— [*She sees* JERRY.] What are you doing here?

JERRY. I came to buy Betty's contract.

MRS. DEAN. What?

JERRY. I don't want her to go on the road. I hate travelling.

MRS. DEAN. It's too bad about you. It isn't necessary for you to travel.

JERRY. Oh, yes, it is! I've got to see Betty.

MRS. DEAN. Do you think I'd allow you to trapse around the country after my daughter? Travel on the same train, stop at the same hotel? Do you think I'm going to have Betty compromised by the attentions of an idle rich young man?

JERRY. Compromised? That's so. [*To* ROSENBAUM.] Say, what do you do to go on the stage?

ROSENBAUM. Just go.

JERRY. I'll take that part.

ROSENBAUM. [*Quickly.*] *Twenty* a week?

[JERRY *and* ROSENBAUM *shake hands on the bargain, to the astonishment of* MRS. DEAN *and to the joy of* BETTY, *who runs across to* JERRY'S *outstretched arms.*

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The parlour of the Palace Hotel, Punxatawney—a large room with the dingy aspect and notable lack of comfort so characteristic of the "one-night stand" hotels in America. At the right of the room is a large window with "stringy" lace curtains over which are faded green rep hangings, at the left a fireplace and, towering above it, a black walnut mantel cluttered with garishly coloured bric-à-brac, and at the back and to the left a large opening, showing a hall and a flight of stairs. A round table with a spotted chenille cover stands in the centre of the room with chairs at the right, at the left and at the back of it, all of them of different periods, alike in that they are equally uncomfortable. A rocking-chair at the fireplace, a horsehair sofa at the right of the room, and, near the window, a table on which, in a glass case, is a moth-eaten stuffed bird, complete the furnishings of the room. The wall-paper in an intricate design of green and purple "cabbages," and fly-specked engravings of historical incidents, preferably those depicting death, enhance the general gloom which is intensified rather than mitigated by the light of a ponderous chandelier. It is half-past eleven of an evening in October, six weeks having elapsed since the events of the preceding act.

ROSENBAUM, *his hat pushed down over his forehead, a partially smoked cigar hanging from the corner of his mouth, his hands in his pockets, slouches in the chair at the right of the table, a picture of utter and abandoned despondency. The* NIGHT CLERK, *a tall, rawboned Yankee with hair plastered in deep curves on*

his brow, a heavy, drooping moustache, and dressed in the height of small-town fashion, "featuring" a plaid waistcoat and a made-up four-in-hand tie in which is a cluster scarf-pin of imitation emeralds and diamonds, enters and approaches ROSENBAUM, *who turns and regards him gloomily.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, Mr. Night Clerk?

NIGHT CLERK. Can't find a room. House is chock-a-block. Got two drummers sleepin' on the billiard-table and four old ladies in the bridal soot.

ROSENBAUM. Glad somebody's selling out. What's the attraction?

NIGHT CLERK. This is Old Home Week in Punxatawney.

ROSENBAUM. Any other hotels?

NIGHT CLERK. Everythin's full but the jail. Guess from the carryin's on tonight, it'll be full tomorrow.

ROSENBAUM. What about that drummer who is going out?

NIGHT CLERK. He ain't fit to go on the midnight. He took in a couple of acts of that show, "The Wallop," at the Opera House, and ever since he's been drinkin' somethin' terrible.

ROSENBAUM. Where is he? I'll join him. [*He rises.* TOMPKINS *enters.*] Hello, Tompkins.

NIGHT CLERK. Will I fix a cot in here?

TOMPKINS. [*To* ROSENBAUM.] Can't you get a room?

ROSENBAUM. No, the hotel has a hit.

TOMPKINS. Go over and take mine.

ROSENBAUM. I'll take a chance on the cot.

[*He sits.*

TOMPKINS. You'll never sleep.

[*He sits on the other side of the table.*

ROSENBAUM. Yes, I will. I've got some plays to read.

NIGHT CLERK. Want anythin' else?

ROSENBAUM. Yes, a lot of poison.

NIGHT CLERK. [*Smiling.*] Rye or Scotch?

ROSENBAUM. Bring us a couple of slugs out of that drummer's bottle.

[*The* NIGHT CLERK *goes.*

TOMPKINS. I didn't know you were in front tonight. When did you get here?

ROSENBAUM. 7:30. I went straight to the theatre.

TOMPKINS. Well, what do you think of the show?

ROSENBAUM. I hate to tell you.

TOMPKINS. As bad as that?

ROSENBAUM. Worse.

TOMPKINS. Is it the performance?

ROSENBAUM. No. As the saying goes, "You put it over, but it lay there and it died."

TOMPKINS. You saw it with a cold house.

ROSENBAUM. We've had three weeks of cold houses.

TOMPKINS. You got my letter about young Belden? You've got to let him go if you're going to take this show into New York.

ROSENBAUM. I'm taking it into New York—to Cain's storehouse.

TOMPKINS. Then we blow up?

ROSENBAUM. Tomorrow night.

TOMPKINS. [*Laughing bitterly.*] I picked it for a flivver.

ROSENBAUM. You were a good picker.

TOMPKINS. Well, why did you produce it?

ROSENBAUM. I wanted to do something for art.

TOMPKINS. Seems to me the minute you managers collect a little loose change providing entertainment for the tired business man, you go bugged producing something for the highbrows.

ROSENBAUM. I'm cured. A small cast and one set of scenery: that's going to be my idea of art.

TOMPKINS. [*Picking up the manuscript.*] Is this it? [*Reading the title.*] "A Drop of Poison!"

ROSENBAUM. No, that's worse than "The Wallop." Give it to me. I'll bury it.

[*He rises, takes the manuscript and puts in his travel-*

ling bag which is on the sofa. The NIGHT CLERK *returns with a tray containing the drinks.*

NIGHT CLERK. Here you are, gentlemen. [ROSENBAUM *pays for the drinks.*] Thank you, Mr. Tompkins, for them passes. "The Wallop" is some show!

ROSENBAUM. Did you like it?

[*He sits again.*

NIGHT CLERK. Immense.

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, give it to him.

TOMPKINS. No; he may have a wife and family.

NIGHT CLERK. Of course, I don't set up to know much about shows. But you take it from me——

ROSENBAUM. He wants to give it back to us.

[TOMPKINS *and* ROSIE *drink.*

NIGHT CLERK. Maybe you don't want me to say what I think?

TOMPKINS. What you think is going to make a whole lot of difference to us.

NIGHT CLERK. Your first act's punk.

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, make a note of that.

NIGHT CLERK. And I don't like your leadin' man.

TOMPKINS. Shake, brother, shake!

[*He rises, grabs the* NIGHT CLERK'S *hand and shakes it, then sits again.*

NIGHT CLERK. The audience would a liked it better if there was more to laugh at.

ROSENBAUM. Bring 'em around and let 'em look at me.

NIGHT CLERK. There's a lot of other things I can't think of just this minute.

TOMPKINS. [*Imploringly.*] Try! Won't you?

ROSENBAUM. But don't give yourself a headache.

NIGHT CLERK. Oh, pshaw, thinkin' don't bother me. I'm used to it. Always help all the managers fix up their shows.

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, he's a lovely fellow. If it won't interrupt you, bring up some sandwiches and some beer.

NIGHT CLERK. How many of you's going to celebrate?

ROSENBAUM. There'll be six pallbearers.

NIGHT CLERK. Ain't you show folks the kidders?

[*Chuckling, he goes.*

TOMPKINS. Going to break the sad blow to the bunch tonight?

ROSENBAUM. Yes. I left word for Effie and Johnnie, the Deans and young Belden to see me here. I didn't want to break it to Mrs. Dean alone.

TOMPKINS. Well, Mathilda's going to emit a yell that would make the roar of a Bengal tiger sound like the voice of a cooing dove.

ROSENBAUM. If she assaults me I have witnesses. You'll join us?

TOMPKINS. [*Rising.*] I've got to go back to the show shop. See that the scenery gets out. Want me to tell the working staff?

ROSENBAUM. Yes. I'll tell the rest of the company. Where'll I find them?

[*He rises.*

TOMPKINS. Across the street at the cheap hotel.

[*He goes.* ROSENBAUM *is following him dejectedly when* BETTY *appears in street attire. She shakes hands with* ROSENBAUM.

BETTY. Oh, how do you do, Mr. Rosenbaum. Do you want to see me?

ROSENBAUM. Yes. Where is your mother?

BETTY. She stopped at the telegraph office.

ROSENBAUM. Will you wait here? I'll be right back.

BETTY. Certainly.

[*As she moves towards the fireplace,* JERRY *enters breezily.*

JERRY. Well, Rosie, how do you feel?

ROSENBAUM. Like someone pushed me off the Singer Building.

[*He goes.* JERRY, *laughing, follows him to the door, looks out to see that no one is coming, then rushes to* BETTY, *grabs her and kisses her.*

BETTY. Jerry!

JERRY. It's the first chance I've had in six weeks, and I may not get another, so I'll take a few more now before mother gets on the job again.

[*He kisses her again.*

BETTY. Poor old Jerry! To be near his Betty did he have to be an actor?

JERRY. This consoles me.

[*He tries to kiss her again.* BETTY *evades him and moves away.*

BETTY. You won't have to be one much longer

JERRY. [*Following her.*] What do you mean?

BETTY. We're going to close.

JERRY. Close what?

BETTY. The play's a failure.

JERRY. Who told you?

BETTY. No one. I know the symptoms. Mother will be furious.

JERRY. Going back to New York! Great! Come on now, hip-hip——

BETTY. I haven't a "hip-hip" in me. Oh, I wish this beastly play had gone to New York and failed, satisfied mother and set me free.

JERRY. Free! Won't you marry me now?

BETTY. No, I can't go back on my promise to mother. I said I'd wait until I had my chance on Broadway. It will be a case of look for another engagement.

[*She sinks wearily onto the sofa.*

JERRY. What! Me have to act again?

[*He falls into a chair.*

BETTY. I'm afraid you wouldn't get the chance, dear. Not if they saw you.

JERRY. Have I made this tour of darkest America, endured all the horrors of those one-night-stands, no decent beds, food that's a crime, all that for nothing?

BETTY. I didn't ask you to do it.

JERRY. You might have told me I wasn't going to have

a minute alone with you. Can't sit in the same seat with you on the train, can't go for a walk, can't sit at the same table, can't even carry your grip for fear of compromising you.

BETTY. I'm not responsible for the etiquette of this profession.

JERRY. Can't even see you at the theatre. The only minute I get with you is dancing that darn tango, and they won't let us take an encore on that.

BETTY. I'm not running the performance.

JERRY. Have to stand around and see that goggle-eyed leading man mauling you all over the stage. [*He rises and goes to her.*] One thing I'll do before we close. I'll take a punch at him.

BETTY. And how do you think I like it?

JERRY. Well, you act as though you enjoyed it.

[*He walks away, sulkily.*

BETTY. [*Rising.*] Enjoy it! I've had a lovely time on this trip. It's so comfortable to play a love scene with you in one entrance glaring at me if I play it well and mother in another entrance glaring at me if I don't.

JERRY. I suppose I am a little jealous.

BETTY. A little? You're full of it.

JERRY. [*Going to her.*] Don't you understand? Betty, don't you love me?

BETTY. I don't love anybody, I just want to get married.

[*She turns to* JERRY, *and puts her head on his shoulder.*

JERRY. [*Putting his arms around her.*] Come on, let's find a minister.

BETTY. I've just told you I've got to wait till mother gets me on Broadway. [*Disgustedly.*] Broadway! When all I want is a farm and chickens and a little calf.

JERRY. I've only twenty thousand dollars a year, Betty, but I guess we could run a little farm on that. If you ever do give up the stage, you won't want to act again.

BETTY. Every wife has to act a little.

[*She kisses him. The* NIGHT CLERK *enters with a tray on which are beer and sandwiches. They jump apart.*

JERRY. [*Embarrassed.*] We—we were rehearsing.

NIGHT CLERK. Oh, don't mind me. I ain't no scandal monger.

[*He puts the tray on the table.*

[*Enter* EFFIE *and* JOHNNY *in rather dingy attire.*

EFFIE. Hello children. Where's Mr. Rosenbaum?

NIGHT CLERK. He said not to wait. You can wade right in.

[*He goes.*

JERRY. Shall I open these now?

[*He indicates the bottles.*

JOHNNY. I'll never have a worse thirst.

[JERRY *sits at the right of the table opening a bottle of beer;* BETTY *takes a sandwich and sits on the couch.* EFFIE *sits at the left of the table and begins to munch sandwiches.* JOHNNY *goes over to the fireplace.*

EFFIE. Why the feast?

JOHNNY. I hate to be the one to spread the pall over this merry gathering, but it looks to me like a two weeks' notice in disguise.

BETTY. Me too!

JERRY. What makes you think we close?

JOHNNY. My boy, a bad play playing to worse business, and a sudden visit from the manager—well, when you've been in the business as long as I have, you'll be able to put that two and two together without straining your psychic powers.

EFFIE. I've been expecting it. We opened on Friday the 13th.

JOHNNY. There was a peacock on that garden drop.

BETTY. I always hated that business of my opening an umbrella.

JERRY. I didn't know that actors were superstitious.

BETTY. We're not.

JOHNNY. Somebody's been stringing you.

JERRY. Well, thank the Lord, no more dressing in the flies for me.

JOHNNY. It's so long since I dressed anywhere else. That's one of the beauties of this profession, the older you grow the more stairs you climb.

JERRY. Cheer up, Johnny, we only live once.

JOHNNY. And if you're an actor you only live half the time.

EFFIE. [*Tearfully.*] Oh, what will we do?

JOHNNY. Oh, why worry, when you can be buried for twenty-five dollars?

EFFIE. Oh, Johnny, don't.

[*She begins to cry.* JOHNNY *goes to her quickly and puts his arms about her.*

JOHNNY. Oh, Effie, old girl——

EFFIE. What would happen to me, if anything happened to you? Life's hard enough together. Oh, curse this business!

JERRY. It's a dog's life.

BETTY. [*Rising and going to* JERRY.] Oh, no, all a dog has to do is lie around and get fat. We don't dare do that.

JOHNNY. Got to begin all over again. The heart-breaking hunt for a job! If you get it, rehearse for weeks with nothing coming in, and your last bit of savings going out for wardrobe. Then the suspense! Will it go? Will it fail? It's tough enough when you're young, but it's a hell of a trade when you're old.

BETTY. [*Tenderly.*] Not when you grow old together, Johnny. That's all we ask, isn't it, Jerry?

[*She puts her hand on* JERRY'S *shoulder;* JERRY *pats it and kisses it.*

JOHNNY. Jerry's different. I had no right to marry Effie when I couldn't support her.

EFFIE. A lot you had to say about it. I saw that you were my happiness and I grabbed you.

JOHNNY. [*Very tenderly.*] You've never regretted it, have you?

EFFIE. Sometimes when you row about the breakfast coffee.

JOHNNY. Stung!

[*He sits at the back of the table.*

JERRY. Have some beer, Mrs. Brinkley?

EFFIE. What do you think, Johnny? You know how I take on weight.

JOHNNY. [*Handing her a glass of beer.*] Aw, go on! The more there is of you, the more I love you.

EFFIE. Johnny, I think you're the nicest husband in the world.

JOHNNY. Effie, if I told you what I think about you it would sound like Romeo at his frothiest.

EFFIE. [*Giggling.*] Aren't we a couple of old sillies?

BETTY. We think you're a couple of old dears, don't we, Jerry?

JERRY. Are you going to stick to me like that?

BETTY. If you're as nice as Johnny.

EFFIE. Hush, Betty, he'll get so puffed up, there'll be no living with him.

[BETTY *laughs and moves to the couch.* JERRY *follows her.* ROSENBAUM *appears.* JOHNNY, EFFIE *and* BETTY *knowing what is coming, settle themselves for the blow which* ROSENBAUM *hates to deliver. He hesitates, coughs and then begins.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, children, in this business, we've got to be good gamblers. This is a very painful moment. I——

JERRY. Oh, they all know you're going to close.

BETTY. Oh, Jerry, let him read his speech.

ROSENBAUM. What's the use? He stole my climax. I'm sorry, people. You've all worked hard to help me put "The Wallop" over. If the show had a ghost of a chance,

I'd stick. But you've seen the business. After I give you two weeks' salary and get you home, I won't be able to pay the first installment on a two cent stamp.

BETTY. Oh, Mr. Rosenbaum, I'm so sorry.

[*She goes to him and gives him her hand.*

JERRY. Me too. If I can help you out, old man.

EFFIE. Oh, Rosie, are you broke?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, that's all right. I didn't have money long enough to get intimate with it.

[*He sits at the right of the table.* BETTY *returns to the couch beside* JERRY.

JERRY. It always struck me that the only *wallop* in the show was in the title.

EFFIE. Of course, if there had been more of Johnny and me in the piece. But our scene in the last act came too late to save it.

JOHNNY. Yes, and when I showed the author where he could slide us in here and there, he handed me a lot of junk about "construction." The poor nut!

EFFIE. [*Indignantly.*] Yes, and instead of thanking you, you'd have thought Johnny was trying to tamper with his deathless English prose.

ROSENBAUM. He doesn't know that plays may be written but that successes are rewritten.

JOHNNY. Yes, by actors.

[ROSIE *turns and looks at* JOHNNY. EFFIE *nods an assent to the statement.*

BETTY. He was awfully nice to me.

JERRY. Why not? You were the best thing in his play.

EFFIE. Rosie, what'll you do?

ROSENBAUM. I guess I'll tackle the ten cent movies. If I can't be the Erlanger of the drama, I'll be the Woolworth.

JOHNNY. We might try the movies, Effie.

EFFIE. Why, Johnny, I can't fall off the Brooklyn Bridge at my time of life, at least, not gracefully.

[MRS. DEAN *appears, unobserved, in the door dressed as in the previous act.*

MRS. DEAN. Good evening, everybody. There you are, Betty. It's bedtime for my little girl.

[JERRY, *at the sound of her voice, jumps quickly from the sofa where he has been seated, his arm around* BETTY, *who rises in confusion and goes to* MRS. DEAN. *The others are surprised at* MRS. DEAN'S *cheerful mood.*

EFFIE. [*Whispering across the table to* ROSENBAUM.] Have you broken the news to Mathilda?

[ROSENBAUM *shakes his head.*

JOHNNY. [*Whispering.*] Go on. Get it over.

[ROSENBAUM *rises, fearing the task ahead of him, and walks slowly towards the fireplace.* JOHNNY *and* EFFIE *wait for the explosion from* MRS. DEAN.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, Mrs. Dean.

MRS. DEAN. [*Joining him.*] Yes, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. [*Beginning his set speech.*] In this business we've got to be good gamblers. This is a very painful moment. I——

MRS. DEAN. Yes, we close.

ROSENBAUM. [*Greatly surprised.*] You knew?

MRS. DEAN. [*Very pleasantly.*] Yes. It's too bad. We've been such a happy family.

JOHNNY. Yes, just like a Zoo.

[MRS. DEAN *glares over her shoulder at* JOHNNY. EFFIE *reproves* JOHNNY *with a glance.*

ROSENBAUM. I've fallen down on my promise to take your daughter into New York.

MRS. DEAN. Oh, I understand perfectly, Mr. Rosenbaum. It's hard enough to get New Yorkers in to see a good play. You can't drive them in to a bad one, unless you send a taxicab with every pass.

[ROSENBAUM, *bewildered, looks at* JOHNNY *and* EFFIE *who are equally taken aback, then sits again at the right of the table.*

BETTY. [*Going to her mother.*] Oh, mother, I thought you'd be annoyed.

MRS. DEAN. Oh, my dear, to have been associated with a failure on Broadway, would have been death to your career.

JERRY. What do you mean?

MRS. DEAN. You'll all be so glad to know that Betty's future is assured.

JERRY. Do you mean——?

BETTY. Oh, mother, am I going to be married?

MRS. DEAN. [*Firmly.*] No. [*Beamingly.*] You're going with Belasco.

JERRY. Belasco!

BETTY. What!

MRS. DEAN. Yes, I just sent a wire accepting a part in a new production. To be sure it's only a bit, but better a bit on Broadway than a great part in Punxatawney. Good night everybody. Come, Betty.

[*She and* BETTY *start to go.* JERRY *follows them to the door.*

JERRY. Betty!

[MRS. DEAN *glares at* JERRY *and leads* BETTY *away.* JERRY *moves slowly down to the fireplace where he stands the picture of dejection. The others look at him in sympathy.*

JOHNNY. Isn't she the fox? She felt this coming and laid her pipes.

EFFIE. [*Rising.*] She's right to think of her girl. I wish she would think a little more of you, boy. [*She goes to* JERRY *and puts her hand in his.*] Good night. Don't worry. God bless you. I've handed that line across so often, but this time no stage manager could say I didn't have real feeling back of it.

JERRY. And it never landed harder.

[*Moved, he puts his arm around* EFFIE, *who is crying, and takes her to the door.* JOHNNY *joins*

them and puts his arm about JERRY'S *shoulder in a sympathetic hug.*

JOHNNY. Good night, son. Take my advice, go out and put some vine leaves in your hair.

[*They go, leaving* JERRY *standing at the door lost in thought. He is seized suddenly by an idea and runs quickly to* ROSENBAUM *who is seated, a prey to despondency.*

JERRY. Rosie, do you want to make some easy money?

ROSENBAUM. [*Startled.*] Where is it? Who's got it?

JERRY. I have. I want you to put on a play for me.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, no, Jerry. I'm too fond of you.

JERRY. Then you'll do this for me. I'll guarantee all expenses.

ROSENBAUM. Pinch me! Pinch me!

JERRY. You get the play and star Betty on Broadway. Are you on?

ROSENBAUM. [*Turning to* JERRY.] Wait a minute. Isn't there a kick in this?

JERRY. No, and what's more, I'll give you $5,000 cash for yourself if——

ROSENBAUM. [*Disgustedly.*] If! Always there's an "if." Sometimes I think it's my middle name.

JERRY. Five thousand dollars, Rosie, if you'll guarantee me *a—sure fire failure!*

ROSENBAUM. He's got his brain turned.

JERRY. Never saner in my life. Didn't you hear Betty's mother say a moment ago that to be associated with a failure would be death to Betty's career? Well, all I want to do is to cover up that career with a couple of "Rests in Peace" and a nice big "Gates Ajar."

ROSENBAUM. I don't get you.

[*He rises, dazed, and goes to* JERRY.

JERRY. Betty's promised her mother that she won't marry me until she's had a chance on Broadway. We furnish the chance. A failure for mother would mean wedding bells for Betty and me. Now do you get me?

ROSENBAUM. [*Eagerly.*] If you want a failure, why not buy "The Wallop"?

JERRY. Oh, no, mother's on to that, and Betty's part's not big enough. Come on, we've got to cinch this thing tonight. I want quick action.

ROSENBAUM. You got the play?

JERRY. No. You've got to get it. You've got to work for that money.

ROSENBAUM. I don't believe I'd know how to pick a failure.

JERRY. [*Laughing.*] Kind regards to "The Wallop."

ROSENBAUM. Suppose Mrs. Dean won't fall for it?

JERRY. All you got to do with Mrs. Dean is to murmur the word "Star." I'll send for her.

[*He presses the push button.*

ROSENBAUM. But we haven't a play.

JERRY. None kicking around any place?

ROSENBAUM. [*Recollecting.*] Sure, I got a grip full of 'em.

[*He gets his travelling bag, places it on a chair beside the table, opens it and begins to lay the manuscripts on the table. The* NIGHT CLERK *enters.*

JERRY. Will you go up to Mrs. Dean's room and tell her Mr. Rosenbaum would like to see her here immediately?

NIGHT CLERK. [*Demurring.*] It's pretty late.

JERRY. That won't make any difference.

[*He gives him a liberal tip.*

NIGHT CLERK. Well, if you insist. I hope being actresses they won't get the idea that I'm tryin' to make improper advances.

JERRY. Oh, you get out! [*He goes.*] Here, Rosie, spread 'em out. Now pick one!

ROSENBAUM. What?

JERRY. Here, I'll show you. Go it blind.

[*He stands at the back of the table on which the manuscripts are now spread out. He puts his hand over his eyes.* ROSENBAUM *looks at him and chuckles.*

ROSENBAUM. By Jiminy, it's as good a way to pick 'em as any.

JERRY. Eeny, meeny, miney, mo. [*On "mo" he grabs a manuscript.*] There you are. [*He picks it up and reads the title "A Drop of Poison."* ROSIE *roars with laughter.* JERRY *is bewildered.*] What is it? Is it a comedy?

ROSENBAUM It's a freak.

JERRY. Have you read it?

ROSENBAUM. [*Taking it.*] Some of it. Listen to the note in red ink. [*Reads.*] "NOTE: The last act—[*he roars*] the last act takes place—[*he roars again*] the last act takes place eight years before the opening of the FIRST."

JERRY. It listens like a sure fire flivver.

[JERRY *and* ROSENBAUM *are hanging on to each other weak from laughter when the* NIGHT CLERK *returns.*

NIGHT CLERK. Mrs. Dean will be right down.

JERRY. [*To* ROSIE.] "A Drop of Poison."

[*They both laugh.*

NIGHT CLERK. She asks you to excuse her kimony.

JERRY. Kimony!

[*They howl with laughter again, to the intense annoyance of the* NIGHT CLERK, *who goes.*

JERRY. I'll get out and let you handle it.

ROSENBAUM. All right. When I ring you'll know it's settled. I'll set the stage.

JERRY. And say, I'm not in on this.

ROSENBAUM. Don't you want to be in the company?

JERRY. I should say not. I'm fed up on this acting game. "A Drop of Poison."

[*He laughs and disappears.*

[ROSENBAUM *has hastily put the other manuscripts in the bag which he conceals underneath the table. Then sitting, he takes out his pocket handkerchief and opening the script of "A Drop of Poison" at random, waits for the arrival of* MRS. DEAN. *Presently there is a knock.* ROSENBAUM *is convulsed*

with silent laughter, as he pretends to be engrossed in the play. MRS. DEAN *knocks again. Then she enters, attired in a faded pink kimono,* ROSENBAUM *watching her out of the corner of his eye.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Sobbing.*] Oh, what a great play! My, what a pathetic climax!

[*He sobs again, covers his eyes with his handkerchief.* MRS. DEAN *coughs.* ROSENBAUM *wipes his eyes, crosses to* MRS. DEAN, *takes her by the arm, leads her to a chair, then stands beside her.* MRS. DEAN *is surprised by his actions.* ROSENBAUM *smiles at her ingratiatingly.*] My dear Mrs. Dean, I have a proposition to make you.

MRS. DEAN. [*Bounding out of her chair.*] Sir!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, this is strictly business.

MRS. DEAN. Then, come to the point. I don't care to have any prying eyes see me in a man's room at the dead of night in my dishabilly.

ROSENBAUM. I have to see you. I just found the most marvellous play for your daughter, the most wonderful part.

MRS. DEAN. [*Sneeringly.*] Pardon me, Mr. Rosenbaum, but you wouldn't recognise a wonderful part if it came up and kissed you.

ROSENBAUM. I'll give Betty anything she wants. I'll take her to New York. I've got the backing.

MRS. DEAN. I listened to your siren song once, and it landed me in Punxatawney. Good evening.

[*She starts to go.*

ROSENBAUM. Too bad. I was going to *star* Bettina.

[*He sits in the rocking chair.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Stopping.*] What did you say, Mr. Rosenbaum? [ROSENBAUM *laughs quietly.* MRS. DEAN *comes to him.*] What did you say, Mr. Rosenbaum?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, excuse me. I was just thinking how Bettina Dean in red and yellow electric lights would look.

MRS. DEAN. [*Wistfully.*] In one row across the front of a Broadway theatre.

ROSENBAUM. Two rows would be more imposing.

MRS. DEAN. Perhaps it would. [*She sits at the left of the table.*] I thought you were broke?

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] I can always get backing for a good play. I'll give you a guarantee. I'm only producing this to take Betty into New York.

MRS. DEAN. What is the play? Of course, there's no use my considering it unless Betty has all the situations and all the climaxes. If anybody else in the play has anything to do, why be a star?

ROSENBAUM. We'll make it a monologue.

MRS. DEAN. [*Picking up the manuscript from the table.*] Is this it?

ROSENBAUM. Hadn't you better wait until I have it revised according to your ideas?

[*He tries to take the manuscript.*

MRS. DEAN. I'll attend to that. Is the author amenable?

ROSENBAUM. I think he's an American.

MRS. DEAN. What is the part?

ROSENBAUM. [*Puzzled, then taking a chance.*] An unhappy wife.

MRS. DEAN. Haven't they been done?

ROSENBAUM. I never heard of one being done.

[MRS. DEAN *laughs, but her laugh dies as she sees the title.*

MRS. DEAN. "A Drop of Poison!"

ROSENBAUM. Don't you like it?

MRS. DEAN. Impossible!

ROSENBAUM. Change it. Change it.

[*He sits at the right of the table.*

MRS. DEAN. The title should include the name of the star part. [*She looks at the manuscript.*] Dora Chapman. Let me see. Of course, being the heroine, she's in trouble. I've got it. "Dora's Dilemma."

ROSENBAUM. What's a Dilemma?

MRS. DEAN. Another name for trouble.

ROSENBAUM. That's a great title for any play.

MRS. DEAN. Is Mr. Tompkins going to stage this piece?

ROSENBAUM. Under your direction. You might as well do it first as last.

MRS. DEAN. We'll do it together.

ROSENBAUM. Then the deal's on?

[*He rises, reaches his hand to her across the table.*

MRS. DEAN. Wait a minute. [ROSIE *sits again.*] Of course, Betty will have the usual privilege of a woman star, no actress younger than herself in the company?

ROSENBAUM. Certainly.

MRS. DEAN. No member of the supporting cast to be mentioned in the newspapers. Of course, if one of them should die, we couldn't prevent a slight obituary.

ROSENBAUM. Anything else?

MRS. DEAN. Yes, the salary.

ROSENBAUM. I'm listening.

MRS. DEAN. Two hundred dollars a week, all dresses and 51% of the profits, the real profits. I'll look over the accounts myself, and remember, Mr. Rosenbaum, I won a prize at school for arithmetic.

ROSENBAUM. My, what a head for a Christian!

[MRS DEAN *rises, smiling effusively, and shakes hands with* ROSENBAUM, *who rises.*

MRS. DEAN. How fortunate for you that we've met—we'll make a lot of money for you.

ROSENBAUM. [*Sapiently.*] You're going to make $5,000 for me, anyway.

[BETTY *enters.*

BETTY. Mother, what are you doing? Aren't you ever coming to bed?

MRS. DEAN. [*Rushing to her.*] Oh, Betty dear, the most wonderful news! You're going to be a star!

BETTY. [*Indifferently.*] Am I?

MRS. DEAN. But, darling, aren't you excited?

BETTY. No, I'm sleepy. Who's going to star me?

[*She sits in the rocking-chair.*

ROSENBAUM. Me.

BETTY. [*Rocking.*] I thought we were going with Belasco?

MRS. DEAN. When you can go with Mr. Rosenbaum? The idea!

[ROSENBAUM *smiles conceitedly.*

BETTY. [*Yawning as she rocks.*] It's all the same to me.

MRS. DEAN. You're going to have everything you want.

BETTY. [*Hiding a smile.*] Oh, I am? Will I have my say-so about who's in the company?

ROSENBAUM. Certainly. Certainly.

BETTY. Then I want Effie and Johnnie.

[*She rocks.* MRS. DEAN *looks at* ROSIE, *who nods assent.*

MRS. DEAN. If there's a place for them.

BETTY. [*Firmly.*] I'll make one. And I want Jerry.

[MRS. DEAN, *dismayed, turns to* ROSIE, *who signifies consent.*

MRS. DEAN. Of course, if there's a very small bit.

BETTY. No bits. He's going to play the lead.

[MRS. DEAN *and* ROSIE *are paralysed.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Recovering.*] Do you want to handicap your career?

BETTY. If any other man makes love to me on the stage it handicaps me in real life with Jerry.

MRS. DEAN. Betty, listen to reason. [*To* ROSENBAUM.] This isn't like my little girl.

BETTY. Your little girl's enough like you to put her foot down and put it down hard. You want me to star and I want to marry Jerry. He is either going to be my leading man or my husband. You can take your choice.

[*She rocks.*

ROSENBAUM. Mrs. Dean, come here a moment.

[MRS. DEAN *goes to him. He takes her aside.*

BETTY. You two needn't try to put up any schemes.

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] Why not let him play it?

MRS. DEAN. [*Whispering.*] Have you gone crazy, too?

ROSENBAUM. Don't you see, if she has a good leading

man, it won't be such a walk-over for her. The worse he is, the more she'll shine.

MRS. DEAN. [*Smiling.*] You're a very bright man, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. Yes, I think so, but maybe I'm partial.

MRS. DEAN. [*Going to* BETTY.] It's all right, Betty; you shall have your wish, but it's a frightful risk.

BETTY. [*Rocking.*] I'll teach him to play it.

MRS. DEAN. [*Vindictively.*] And I'll rehearse him in it until he drops.

[JERRY, *entering, stops at the sight of them.* ROSIE *and* JERRY *exchange glances.* BETTY *rises and runs to* JERRY.

BETTY. Oh, Jerry, we're not going to be separated! I'm going to star [JERRY *smiles*] and you're going to be my leading man.

JERRY. What!

[*Amazed, he looks at* ROSIE, *who moves away.*

BETTY. My leading man!

JERRY. [*Furiously.*] Me? I am not!

[*He turns away.*

BETTY. Why, Jerry!

JERRY. Not by a darn sight.

[*He starts angrily for* ROSENBAUM, BETTY *towards the door, followed by* MRS. DEAN *and* ROSENBAUM.

ROSENBAUM. There goes my $5,000. Wait, wait!

[MRS. DEAN *brings* BETTY *back and* ROSENBAUM *returns to* JERRY.

BETTY. I won't star for anybody, unless he plays the lead.

JERRY. No, sir; not on your life.

MRS. DEAN. [*Dramatically.*] This is the man who pretends to love my daughter, and yet he spurns the great honour that is being thrust upon him.

JERRY. I do love your daughter. I'm willing to do anything in reason to make any sacrifice to prove that love, but act again! No! There are limits even to my endurance!

MRS. DEAN. You love her and yet you stand by and see her refuse a great opportunity! The opportunity for which I've spent years of watchful waiting. You'll ruin a great career, ruin all my hopes, my dreams, because of a childish prejudice against the noble art of acting. If you have no thought of her, have pity on me, her mother. For God's sake, be her leading man!

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] Go on, do it, and we'll have a sure-fire failure.

JERRY. [*Grasping the idea.*] Mrs. Dean, if I do this for you, if I beat a lot of fool lines into my brain, if I go on painting my face like a chorus girl, what will you do for me?

MRS. DEAN. Try and make an actor of you!

JERRY. Oh, my God!

[*Aghast, he falls back against the table.*

CURTAIN

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE ONE: *The Dress Rehearsal.*

The stage of a Broadway Theatre at four A. M. *of a Monday in October during the dress rehearsal of* "DORA'S DILEMMA," *which began at eight o'clock of the previous evening and is still in progress. The scene when completed is to represent a handsomely decorated and furnished library, the walls panelled in wood to a certain height, above which is a frieze of tapestry. It is now partially finished. At the back is an opening obviously designed to contain a large window in several sections as one of them with leaded glass panes is in place. Through this opening can be seen a garden back drop, lowered only half way, an electric light border, and beyond and below them the back wall of the theatre. Against this wall are stacked several pieces of scenery, the unpainted side turned towards the spectators and stencilled with the words, "Bettina Dean Co." At the rear and at the left of the window is a door leading to a hall. The backing to represent the hall is not in place. At the lower left is a door, the frame and the door are unpainted. At the right of the stage is an opening for a fireplace in which a fire is lighted, but there is no backing, andirons nor logs, so that the "baby" spot which furnishes the effect of a fire-glow is plainly visible. There is a door at the upper right of the room. The ceiling of the room is not in place, the "lines" holding it plainly visible. There is a large couch placed at right angles to the fireplace, on the opposite side of the room a table desk with a desk chair, its back to the spectators. Another chair is at the right of the desk. Below the door at the left,*

against the wall, is a high-backed chair and one similar in style at the right of the room below the fireplace. These chairs are in the process of upholstery, the material applied on the arms and the backs, but the seats are still in muslin. An arm-chair, covered in velvet, stands at the right of the window. There are no draperies and the cushion of the window seat has not been covered.

Before the curtain is raised there can be heard a confused murmur of voices as though an act of a play was in progress. When it is raised the room is dimly lighted as though by the effect of lamplight and firelight. The people on the stage are made up as the characters they represent in "DORA'S DILEMMA": JOHNNIE BRINKLEY *as* CHAPMAN, *wearing a moustache, a grey wig and a morning coat, vest and striped trousers;* JERRY *as* DICK BENNETT, *in dinner clothes and cap;* BILLINGS, *a stocky individual in a policeman's uniform, and* BETTY *as* DORA CHAPMAN, *in an evening gown.* TOMPKINS *as* HENDERSON, *the butler, in livery but in his shirt-sleeves, leans against the door at the back. He is holding the prompt copy of* "DORA'S DILEMMA" *with which he is following the action of the play.* JOHNNY *is standing in front of the desk,* BILLINGS *at the right of it.* JERRY *in the centre of the room, facing* JOHNNY; BETTY *behind the couch, on which is* JERRY'S *overcoat. Their attitudes are tense, their speech excited, as they are at the climactic moment of the third act of* "DORA'S DILEMMA."

JOHNNY. [*To* HENDERSON.] "Turn on those lights." [*To* BILLINGS.] "Search him!"

BILLINGS. [*Advancing to* JERRY *and threatening him with a pistol.*] "Hold up your hands! Hold up your hands!"

BETTY. Rushing down between BILLINGS *and* JERRY,

holding aloft the papers.] "Stop! Here are the bonds. I am the thief!"

[TOMPKINS *gives the signal for the curtain.* BETTY, BILLINGS *and* JOHNNY *hold the picture which, to their disgust,* JERRY *breaks by pivoting to the front and smiling.* BETTY *hands the bonds to* JOHNNY *wearily. He puts them on the desk as the curtain falls.*

ROSENBAUM. [*At the rear of the auditorium.*] Take your curtain up.

[*There is a pause.*

TOMPKINS. [*Behind the cutrain, and in a loud tone.*] Say, you, come on up with that curtain.

[*The curtain rises slowly, then* MRS. DEAN *enters from the door at the left and, coming to the footlights, shades her eyes from their glare and peers out into the auditorium.*

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Mr. Rosenbaum!

ROSENBAUM. What is it?

MRS. DEAN. Take one good look at this scenery and then come on the stage, please!

[JOHNNY *and* BILLINGS *exchange glances, then go.* TOMPKINS *moves down to the chair at the right of the desk, and sits, looking at the manuscript.* BETTY *is pinning up her train with a long safety-pin.*

BETTY. Mother, how was the climax that time?

MRS. DEAN. Electrical!

[*She puts her arm around* BETTY'S *shoulder and starts to the couch.*

JERRY. [*To* MRS. DEAN.] How was I?

MRS. DEAN. You were awful!

[*She crosses to the couch.* BETTY *sits at the left end of it.* MRS. DEAN *stands beside her. Enter, from the door at the left,* GRANBY SMITH, *the author, a tall, harassed-looking individual in a lounge suit, outing shirt and soft hat. He comes to* JERRY.

SMITH. Mr. Belden!

JERRY. [*Going to him.*] Yes, Mister Author.

SMITH. Are you deliberately trying to kill my play?

JERRY. Am I as bad as that?

SMITH. Bad! [*He groans and, going over to* TOMPKINS, *jerks the manuscript out of his hand.*] Let me look at what's left of my script.

[TOMPKINS *looks at him sneeringly.* SMITH *glowers at him and sits on the edge of the desk, poring over his play.* ROSENBAUM *enters, passing* SMITH, *who glares at him, and goes to* JERRY, *who leads him out of the others' hearing.*

JERRY. Oh, Rosie! How is "Dora's Dilemma"?

ROSIE. It's a crime.

[*They laugh.*

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Rosenbaum, that act ought to make them sit up and take notice.

ROSIE. It's great! Great! [*Turning to* SMITH.] Eh, Smith?

SMITH. It's a great act, if it's acted!

[*He throws the manuscript on the desk, takes a chair, places it below the tormentor at the left edge of the proscenium arch, where he sits, his head buried in his hands.* ROSENBAUM *and* JERRY *laugh.* MRS. DEAN *starts to the left.* JERRY *turns and bumps into her.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Exasperated.*] Mr. Belden, will you sit down? [JERRY *crosses and sits on the floor below the tormentor at the right edge of the proscenium arch.*] Mr. Tompkins, get that scene painter!

[TOMPKINS *looks at* MRS. DEAN *disgustedly, then turns in his chair at the desk and yells.*

TOMPKINS. Painter! Painter!

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Rosenbaum! This scenery is in awful shape. We'll never be ready for tonight!

ROSENBAUM. Well, you wanted a new production for New York and you got it.

[*He joins* SMITH.

[*Enter from the rear door the* SCENE PAINTER, *an emaciated, dejected-looking person, carrying a paint pail, a colour sheet and a brush.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Yelling.*] Oh, Scene Painter! [*He comes down wearily and stands beside her, looking at her vacantly.*] I wish to remind you that we open tonight. That door isn't painted. We have no back drop. [*Very sarcastically.*] Mere details.

[*He looks at her slowly, then yawns in her face.* MRS. DEAN, *furious, is about to address him violently, but her words are lost in the noise of a loud hammering begun at the rear door by* MAGINNIS, *a burly stage carpenter, wearing overalls and a cap.* MRS. DEAN *brushes the* SCENE PAINTER *aside impatiently and begins yelling at* MAGINNIS, *who pays no attention to her. The* SCENE PAINTER *goes up to the door at right, looks at it, then places his pot of paint and the colour sheet on a chair by the window, selecting, naturally, the only chair that has been covered with velvet and that might be damaged. Then he walks out of the door at the right, wearily.* MRS. DEAN *continues to try to make herself heard above the din of the hammering.* TOMPKINS *finally comes to her rescue.*

TOMPKINS. Maginnis!

MAGINNIS. [*Truculently.*] Well?

MRS. DEAN. If that door squeaks *tonight* in my daughter's big scene, *tomorrow* I'll be sending you a wreath of Immortels.

MAGINNIS. [*Getting paper of tobacco out of his pocket and taking a chew.*] Don't worry; it'll be all right tonight.

MRS. DEAN. [*Bitterly.*] Everything'll be all right tonight!

MAGINNIS. Yes'sum, I hope the play will.

[*He winks at* TOMPKINS *as he goes.*

[MRS. DEAN *turns and sees* JERRY *sitting beside* BETTY.

She glares at him. He rises quickly and, going to the window-seat, lies on it. MRS. DEAN *having settled him, turns and sees* IKE GOLDMAN, *the Electrician, entering at the left door. He is tall and rather pleasant-looking. His shirt-sleeves are rolled up, showing that his hands and arms are stained yellow and red by the dyes in which he has been dipping the electric light bulbs that he is carrying. He starts to talk to* TOMPKINS *when* MRS. DEAN *interrupts him.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Severely.*] Electrician! The stage was much too dark in this act. More light, please.

[*She turns and joins* BETTY.

GOLDMAN. [*To* TOMPKINS.] I should think she'd want to hide this act.

TOMPKINS. Don't worry; it'll be buried tonight! Give us your foots.

GOLDMAN. [*Calling off left.*] Oh, Jimmy, come on up with your foots!

[*He goes.*

HICKSON, *the Property Man, a stout young man with a disagreeable cast of countenance and an overbearing manner, comes in the door at the right, followed by his assistant,* STEVE, *a small, slight, meek youth. They are wearing sack suits and soft hats.* HICKSON *goes quickly to the window-seat where* JERRY *is lying.* HICKSON *unceremoniously brushes* JERRY *off the seat and climbs on it.* JERRY *picks himself up and bows elaborately to* HICKSON, *who sneers at him, then begins to take a measurement of the window with a foot-rule which his minion,* STEVE, *has carried on.* MRS. DEAN, *turning, sees him.*

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Property-man! Property-man!

[HICKSON *pays no attention to her.*

TOMPKINS. Hickson!

HICKSON. [*Measuring the window.*] Well?

MRS. DEAN. Where are the pictures for this act?

HICKSON. [*To* STEVE.] Six foot, four inches. [*To* MRS. DEAN.] What pictures?

TOMPKINS. The ones I ordered.

[HICKSON *jumps off the window-seat, grabs the property list from* STEVE'S *hand and gives him the ruler. He comes down to* MRS. DEAN.

HICKSON. [*Insolently.*] Anyone show me any pictures on that list, I'll give 'em a nice little kiss. What pictures do you want?

MRS. DEAN. [*Placating him.*] Can you get me a few fine old masterpieces?

HICKSON. Sure! The property room is just full of 'em. Come on, Steve.

[STEVE *goes out the door at the right.* JERRY *is standing there.* HICKSON, *following* STEVE, *throws* JERRY *out of the way.* JERRY *shakes his fist at* HICKSON, *follows him, but returns immediately.*

ROSENBAUM. Mrs. Dean, the author has an idea.

MRS. DEAN. Let me get it before he loses it.

[*She joins* ROSENBAUM *and* SMITH *at the proscenium arch at the left.*

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, call the company.

TOMPKINS. Everybody on stage, please.

[*He rises wearily.*

BETTY. [*Rising.*] Jerry, how do you like my dress?

[*She unpins the train, letting it fall on the floor, and walks up and down.*

JERRY. Immense!

BETTY. I'm just mad about the train.

[*She moves to the right.* JERRY *follows her.*

TOMPKINS. [*Yelling.*] Everybody on stage, please! [*The members of the company appear at the various entrances.*] Oh, come on!

[*He glowers at them, but it has no effect. They stroll on.* MISS DONAHUE, *a tall, beautiful blonde in an elaborate and extremely décolleté dress;* MISS FARRINGTON, *a red-headed divinity, gorgeously attired;*

MISS TOBY, *a pretty, girlish brunette in a maid's costume, and* EFFIE, *looking remarkably well in a dark blue velvet evening gown, advance to the footlights and, placing their hands below their eyes, look out over them into the auditorium.* JERRY *comes over to them.*

JERRY. Girls, you look great! Effie, if Ziegfeld ever sees you, you're gone!

[BILLINGS *comes hurrying in from the door at the left, followed by* JOHNNY. *They join the group.* JERRY *goes over to* BETTY, *whispers to her. She turns and sees that* MRS. DEAN *is busily engrossed with* ROSENBAUM *and* SMITH, *then, taking* JERRY'S *arm, they run out through the door at the right.* EFFIE, MISS DONAHUE, BILLINGS, MISS TOBY, JOHNNY, MISS FARRINGTON *and* TOMPKINS, *who is leaning against the desk, are lined up from right to left. They shift wearily from one foot to another, yawning.*

EFFIE. [*Yawning.*] What time is it?

[BILLINGS *shoves up the sleeve of his policeman's uniform and looks at his wrist watch.*

BILLINGS. [*In a pronounced English accent.*] A bit after four.

FARRINGTON. If I'm going to keep this job, my dressing-room ought to have a cot and a kitchenette.

MISS DONAHUE. My Gawd, and there are people who want to go on the stage!

TOMPKINS. [*Sarcastically.*] Where do you horn in?

MISS DONAHUE. Mr. Rosenbaum insisted that he needed my personality to put this piece over.

TOMPKINS. [*To* MRS. DEAN.] Who do you want in this act?

MRS. DEAN. [*Over her shoulder.*] I have suggestions for all of you.

[*She turns again to* SMITH.

JOHNNY. She's the woman who put the hearse in rehearsal!

[*He sits in the chair at the desk.*

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, fetch the script.

[TOMPKINS *takes the manuscript to* ROSENBAUM, *who abetted by* MRS. DEAN *begins to browbeat the author.*

MISS TOBY. What are they going to do?

EFFIE. [*Sarcastically.*] I suppose they're going to rewrite the piece again and give Dora another dilemma.

MISS DONAHUE. If it isn't right now, with three weeks' rehearsal and two weeks on the road, I can see where I go back to manicuring.

[EFFIE *goes up to the couch and puts on* JERRY'S *overcoat, which is thrown across it.*

MRS. DEAN. [*To* SMITH.] Just let that suggestion penetrate, if it can.

[*She crosses over and stands in front of the company. In her hand are slips of paper on which she has made memoranda.*

TOMPKINS. Now, children!

ROSENBAUM. [*Following* MRS. DEAN.] Mrs. Dean has some valuable suggestions.

[*The company look at one another disgustedly.* TOMPKINS *sits on the left end of the desk.* SMITH, *in his chair at the proscenium arch, groans loudly. Everyone looks at* SMITH.

MRS. DEAN. [*To* SMITH.] Mr. Smith, are you in pain?

SMITH. Would it matter to anybody if I were?

[HICKSON *and* STEVE *return through the door at the right, carrying the "masterpieces."* STEVE *comes down between* EFFIE *and* MISS DONAHUE. HICKSON *comes down between* MISS FARRINGTON *and* MISS TOBY. *They push the actresses aside rudely.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to* HICKSON.] What is it?

HICKSON. Here's your masterpieces. Show 'em, Steve!

[STEVE *turns the picture face out to the audience. It*

is a badly painted watermelon with a slice cut out of it. HICKSON *turns the picture he is carrying. It is a plate of lemons.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Pointing to* HICKSON'S *picture.*] Say, what *is* that?

HICKSON. [*To* ROSENBAUM.] A plate of lemons. [*Looking at* SMITH.] I thought it was appropriate.

[SMITH *rises and rushes to the centre.* ROSENBAUM *stops him.* STEVE *and* HICKSON *look indifferently at* SMITH.

STEVE. Who's the string-bean?

HICKSON. [*Indicating* SMITH.] That? It's the author, the poor simp! Come on.

[ROSENBAUM *takes* SMITH *back to the chair, while* HICKSON *and* STEVE *push their way between the actresses again and go.* EFFIE *settles herself comfortably in the corner of the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Advancing.*] Attention, please. Now Mrs. Dean——

MRS. DEAN. [*Consulting notes.*] Oh, where was I? Oh, yes, Miss Toby! [MISS TOBY, *who is made up like a "vamp" with very red lips and a very white face, walks down centre.* MRS. DEAN *leads her down to the footlights.*] My dear, more red on your cheeks, and less on your lips. I know that your home life is beyond reproach, but if you're going to look like that, no one in the audience will believe it. [MISS TOBY *shrugs her shoulder, goes up and sits on window-seat.*] Miss Farrington. [MISS FARRINGTON, *who is talking to* BILLINGS, *pays no attention to* MRS. DEAN.] Miss Farrington! [MISS FARRINGTON *walks down left of* MRS. DEAN *in a very insolent manner.*] When you're introduced to the gentlemen in this act, smile pleasantly. Don't try to lure them to destruction. [MISS FARRINGTON *is furious. She joins* MISS TOBY *on the window-seat.*] Oh, Miss Donahue! Step down, please! [MISS DONAHUE *walks down to the footlights.*] Now, would you turn around, please? [MISS

DONAHUE *turns. She is in an evening dress, which is cut to the "limit" in the back.*] Are you dressed for the opera, or exposed for an operation?

MISS DONAHUE. [*Very languidly.*] My public is used to seeing a great deal of me.

ROSENBAUM. [*Winking at* TOMPKINS.] They're not going to be disappointed.

[MISS DONAHUE *smiles at* ROSENBAUM. BILLINGS *puts his monocle in his eye and, staring at her, follows her up to the window-seat.*

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Effie! Effie! [EFFIE, *rising, drops the overcoat from her shoulders and walks down to* MRS. DEAN, *who turns to* ROSENBAUM.] Don't you think she looks a little young?

EFFIE. It's not my fault if I've retained my youth and beauty.

MRS. DEAN. [*Snapping at her.*] Mr. Belden is supposed to be your son.

EFFIE. I could have been married when I was sixteen.

ROSENBAUM. It's my fault. I told her to cut out the grey hair. Who wants to look at an old woman, if they don't have to?

MRS. DEAN. [*Satirically.*] You seem to forget that she's a broken-hearted mother. Trouble seems to make her hair grow brighter. [EFFIE *looks at her indignantly, and walks away.* MRS. DEAN *goes towards* JOHNNY. *She beckons to* ROSENBAUM.] What's the matter with Johnny's nose?

ROSENBAUM. I don't know. Let's look at it. [*Calling.*] Johnny!

[JOHNNY, *who has been asleep in the chair beside the desk, rouses himself, then comes down to* ROSENBAUM *and* MRS. DEAN. *They look at him.* TOMPKINS *rises and comes down to the left of* JOHNNY. EFFIE *turns and comes to the right of him.* SMITH *moves impatiently in his chair.*

JOHNNY. What is it?

ROSENBAUM. Your nose.

MRS. DEAN. If you could make it recede a little.

JOHNNY. I'm no Doctor Woodbury.

EFFIE. Looks all right to me.

ROSENBAUM. Maybe it's the moustache.

MRS. DEAN. Perhaps if you wore a bow tie.

TOMPKINS. Have you tried white grease paint?

JOHNNY. I've tried everything but putting a ring in it.

[*Everybody, even* MRS. DEAN, *roars with laughter, which maddens* SMITH *who rises and rushes over to them.*

SMITH. Great Heavens! Do you people realise that we open tonight?

[*Everyone stops and looks in surprise at* SMITH.

ROSENBAUM. Sure, we realise it.

SMITH. Then why don't you get down to business, get to something important?

MRS. DEAN. Important? These things are vital.

SMITH. Vital! Is his nose vital?

JOHNNY. I can't get along without it.

[*Everybody laughs again.*

SMITH. [*Furiously.*] You've seen him wear it every night for two weeks. Why wait until the last minute to attend to such fiddling details?

MRS. DEAN. [*Angrily*] If we hadn't had to "fiddle" so much with that ill-constructed mass of verbiage, you call a play.

[*She walks away to the right.* SMITH *to the left.*

ROSENBAUM. Come, come, children, this is a rehearsal, not a prize fight. [*He runs to* MRS. DEAN *and whispers.*] After all, he is the author. Humour him now. We'll do what we like afterwards. [*He runs over to* SMITH, *whispers.*] Humour her. She's a bear.

[*He puts his arm through* SMITH'S *and drags him over to* MRS. DEAN, *then putting his arm through* MRS. DEAN'S, *he stands between them smiling. They are the personification of dislike and antagonism.*

ROSENBAUM. Now, we're all friends again, see. [*To* MRS. DEAN.] Now, what next?

MRS. DEAN. [*Witheringly.*] Oh, no, let's straighten out Mr. Smith's little worries.

[*She moves away to the right and leans against the proscenium arch.* JOHNNY *and* EFFIE, *who is again wearing* JERRY'S *overcoat, are seated on the couch,* TOMPKINS *beside the desk, the others in the window-seat.*

ROSENBAUM. [*To* SMITH.] Now, what's on your mind?

SMITH. [*Impressively.*] Well, I've always thought that if Mrs. Brinkley and Mr. Belden played their scene on that side of the stage [*indicating right*], instead of on this side [*indicating left*], it would improve it wonderfully.

[*He smiles in self-satisfaction.*

EFFIE. More study.

MRS. DEAN. My dear, let's do anything that will improve it.

[SMITH *glares at* MRS. DEAN *and walks away to the left.*

ROSENBAUM. Tompkins, we'll take Mrs. Brinkley's and Belden's scene.

[*Enter the* SCENE PAINTER *with a ladder. He rests it against the frame of the door at the right, then getting the paint pail from the armchair, climbs up on ladder.*

TOMPKINS. [*Calling.*] Mrs. Brinkley and Belden! Clear everybody!

[MISS TOBY, MISS FARRINGTON *and* BILLINGS *exit hurriedly and then reappear at the door at the left, to watch the rehearsal of the scene.* JOHNNY *and* MISS DONAHUE *drag themselves off wearily not interested in anything.* MRS. DEAN *goes to the proscenium arch at the right,* ROSENBAUM, *to it at the left.* TOMPKINS *turns and sees the* SCENE PAINTER.

TOMPKINS. [*Furiously.*] Painter! I said clear.

[*The painter pays not the slightest attention. There is a pause.*

ROSENBAUM. Oh, let him paint.

EFFIE. [*Wearily to* MRS. DEAN.] Where do you want me to begin?

MRS. DEAN. Ask the author.

SMITH. From Belden's entrance. [EFFIE *starts to walk over to the desk at the left.* SMITH *rushes to her.*] And we're going to play it over there.

[*He points to the right.*

EFFIE. [*Angrily.*] It's a fine time to fuss me in the only scene I have in the play. [SMITH *strides away furiously.* EFFIE, *thinking she "has him," points to a photograph on the desk.*] [*Innocently.*] How do I get that photograph?

SMITH. [*Sarcastically.*] Don't you think——

EFFIE. [*Sweetly.*] I have been engaged to act, not to think.

[SMITH *gives it up in despair and goes to his chair at the proscenium and sinks into it wearily.* ROSENBAUM *tries to console him.* MRS. DEAN *looks over at them in sarcastic pity.* JERRY *and* BETTY, *unseen by anyone, do a fox trot back of the window from the right to the left and disappear.* EFFIE *stands victorious in the centre.* TOMPKINS *is delighted with her.*

EFFIE. [*Patiently.*] Well?

MRS. DEAN. Oh, take it with you.

EFFIE. [*Getting the photograph from the desk.*] Is this supposed to be my son's photograph?

SMITH. Certainly, certainly.

EFFIE. Well, I might have something to get me into a sentimental frame of mind. *This* is Lillian Russell.

ROSENBAUM. [*Taking it, hands it to* TOMPKINS.] Tompkins, make a note of that.

TOMPKINS. Hickson!

[HICKSON *appears at the door at the left.*

HICKSON. [*Snarling.*] What do you want?

TOMPKINS. [*Handing the photograph to* HICKSON.] Strike Russell!

[HICKSON *takes the photograph and goes.*

EFFIE. M-m-m-m-m-m-m—long speech ending with [*very sweetly*] "overflowing with tenderness." [JERRY *and* BETTY *fox-trot across back of the window left to right, and disappear. There is a pause. Acidly.*] "Overflowing with tenderness——"

[*A pause.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Irritated.*] Where's Belden?

[BETTY *and* JERRY, *still unobserved, trot back of the window, doing a back and forward step.*

TOMPKINS. [*At the desk.*] I called him.

MRS. DEAN. [*Viciously calling.*] "Overflowing with tenderness——"

TOMPKINS. Oh Belden!

BETTY. [*Off stage.*] Jerry, your cue!

JERRY. Coming!

[*In crossing to the right at the back of the window, he knocks a large tray off the top of a bunch light, then he appears at the door where the* PAINTER *is on the ladder.*

EVERYBODY. The ladder! The ladder! Don't walk under the ladder!

[JERRY *disappears, then is seen running past the window to the door at the rear, from which he enters breathlessly.*

JERRY. I'm sorry. [*He walks down to the chair at the desk, turns and sees* EFFIE *on the couch.*] What are you doing over there?

EFFIE. Don't ask me.

JERRY. How do I get there!

ROSENBAUM. Walk.

MRS. DEAN. Unless you've developed locomotor ataxia.

EFFIE. [*Crossly.*] Oh, come on. [*She rises, goes to* JERRY, *and puts her hands on his shoulder and in the char-*

acter of MR. BENNETT, *speaks tenderly.*] "My son! My son!"

[*She is interrupted by the crash of a falling object off stage.*

TOMPKINS. [*Yelling.*] Quiet off stage!

EFFIE. "My——"

[*Again she is interrupted by a similar sound.*

M'GINNIS. [*Off stage.*] Hey Monk, keep quiet.

JERRY. "Mother—mother—you——"

MONK. [*Off stage.*] Damn slave driver!

ROSENBAUM. Quiet off stage!

EFFIE. "Promise me you'll never do this again—or——"

M'GINNIS. [*Off stage.*] I'll cave in yer dome!

[JERRY *laughs.* EFFIE *moves away in disgust.* SMITH *rises and rushes to* ROSENBAUM.

SMITH. [*Bitterly.*] Marvellous discipline!

ROSENBAUM. Oh, cut to the exit.

[EFFIE *goes to* JERRY, *places her hands on his shoulders, looking up into his face with a sweet, motherly expression.*

EFFIE. "You've made me so happy! My son!"

JERRY. Do you want me to move away from here now?

EFFIE. [*Grabs him by the shoulder, very angrily.*] You stand still until I get through with you. [*Tenderly.*] "My son, my son." Kiss. Bing——

[*She makes a motion of kissing him on the left cheek, then on the right.*

JERRY. Bing——

EFFIE. Let me see. I turned that way, now I turn this way. [*She starts for the rear door, scowling at* SMITH.] Well, I hope I get off, it's a mile up to this door.

[*She meets* JOHNNY, *who is waiting for her with a cup of coffee. They both disappear off left,* EFFIE *talking angrily.*

ROSENBAUM. What else?

SMITH. [*Coming to the centre.*] The love scene.

MRS. DEAN. [*Moving toward him.*] Do you think it's necessary?

JERRY. Oh sure, I'd like to. [*He dashes up to the rear door and calls off stage.*] Oh, Betty!

BETTY. [*Off stage.*] In a minute!

SMITH. [*To* MRS. DEAN.] Belden is the limit in that love scene!

[BETTY *appears at the rear door carrying two cups of coffee. She comes down to her mother.*

BETTY. Here mother.

MRS. DEAN. [*Taking the cup.*] Thank you, darling.

BETTY. [*Offering the cup to* SMITH.] Mr. Smith.

SMITH. Oh, no.

[*He waves it aside impatiently and goes to the couch where he sits.* BETTY *gives the cup to* JERRY, *who puts it on the stand in the left corner of the window.*

JERRY. [*Eagerly.*] Come on, the love scene.

[MISS DONAHUE *appears at the back of the window and sits on the off stage side of the window-seat.* BETTY *and* JERRY *take positions at the centre,* BETTY *at the right of* JERRY. MRS. DEAN *stands at the proscenium arch, at the right.* TOMPKINS *is seated on the desk with the manuscript.* ROSENBAUM *stands beside him.*

JERRY. Are you set?

BETTY. [*Striking an affected attitude.*] Uh huh!

JERRY. Oh, excuse me a minute.

[*He crosses to* BETTY *and they try three positions of the arms in an embrace, and each time* JERRY *kisses her.* SMITH *looks at* MRS. DEAN *imploringly.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Wearily.*] We're waiting, Mr. Belden.

JERRY. Just getting the finish right.

MRS. DEAN. Well, we won't overdo it.

[*She puts her coffee cup on the mantel.* BETTY, *her back towards* JERRY, *re-assumes her pose.* JERRY *goes to the left of her.*

JERRY. Ah—ah—m-m-m-m-m-m——

[*He turns and looks at* TOMPKINS.

TOMPKINS. [*Prompting him.*] "Oh my——"

JERRY. "Oh my——" [*He looks at* TOMPKINS *again.*] Oh my what?

TOMPKINS. [*Prompting.*] "Adored——"

JERRY Adored. "Oh, my adored one." [*He goes to* SMITH.] Say, can't we can that "adored one"?

SMITH. [*Jumping up.*] Why?

JERRY. I'd never say that.

SMITH. [*To* MRS. DEAN.] *He'd* never say that! [*To* JERRY.] You'd never—— Do you realise I've worked days and nights to find that phrase?

JERRY. [*Laughingly.*] Did you? Well, I can find a whole raft of things to say to her and not half try. Can't I, Betty?

[SMITH *falls back on the couch.* JERRY *goes up to take* BETTY *in his arms.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Furiously.*] Mr. Belden, this is a rehearsal!

JERRY. Oh, excuse me! [*He takes his position at the left of* BETTY.] Ah—m-m-m-m-m-m-m—— [*Laughing, he looks at* TOMPKINS *for assistance.*] Isn't that a funny thing?

TOMPKINS. [*Angrily.*] The same.

JERRY. Oh, yes. [*Very amateurishly.*] "Oh, my adored one. I love you with a fever——"

SMITH. [*Jumping up from the couch distractedly.*] Fervour! Fervour!

JERRY. "I love you with a fervour that's undying. [*He advances one step awkwardly toward* BETTY.] Can't you [*another step*], won't you [*another step*] love me just a little in return?"

BETTY. [*Passionately.*] "I love you now."

[*She turns and throws herself into his arms.*

JERRY. [*Casually.*] "And I love you."

[SMITH *looks at him in disgust, then throws himself*

upon the couch. MRS. DEAN, *overcome by the horror of his acting, bows her head on the mantel-piece.* ROSENBAUM *shivers, then looks at* TOMPKINS, *whose expression is one of pain.* BETTY *moves away wearily and sits beside* MISS DONAHUE *on the window-seat.*

ROSENBAUM. Oh, it's so tame!

MRS. DEAN. [*Despairingly.*] I give it up.

[*She joins* SMITH *on the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. What do you think, Tompkins?

TOMPKINS. [*Rising.*] If he got a little, a little——

[*He tries to illustrate "pep" by a movement of his hands.*

ROSENBAUM. Yes, that's a good idea. Oh Jerry. [JERRY *joins them.*] Now, what you want in this scene is a little——

[*He imitates* TOMPKINS' *gesture.*

[SMITH, *afraid that they are going to do something else to his play, rushes down to the group.* TOMPKINS *and* ROSENBAUM *repeat their gesture.* JERRY *watches them utterly bewildered, then imitating them, turns to* SMITH.

JERRY. What does that mean?

[ROSENBAUM *and* TOMPKINS *look despairingly at* JERRY, *then shaking their heads despondently, move away,* ROSENBAUM *sitting in the chair at the proscenium arch at the left,* TOMPKINS *on the desk, his back to* JERRY.

SMITH. I suppose he means to put in a little pep!

JERRY. Mrs. Dean asked me to tone it down.

SMITH. No, no! And Miss Dean [*going up to her*], get a little abandon into it.

MRS. DEAN. [*Jumping up.*] Betty! Some chaste abandon.

[*She goes to the proscenium arch at the right.* SMITH, *hopeless, sits on the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Impatiently.*] Oh go on, take the finish.

[BETTY *rising, comes toward* JERRY. *He puts his arms around her.*

JERRY. [*Indifferently.*] "I love you." [*Passionately.*] Oh Lord! How much I love you!

SMITH. [*Rising.*] That last line isn't in the part.

JERRY. It just slipped out naturally.

BETTY. Oh say it, Jerry, it sounds awfully sweet.

SMITH. Oh, are you going to re-write my piece, too, Miss Dean?

MRS. DEAN. Everybody else has, why discriminate against my daughter?

[SMITH *rushes to leave the stage.* ROSENBAUM *rises and grabs him.*

ROSENBAUM. Oh, what makes you authors so sensitive?

MRS. DEAN. Now, if Mr. Smith has finished——

SMITH. Oh, I'm through, I'm through.

[*He sits on the chair from which* ROSENBAUM *has risen.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Taking command.*] Then we'll take the third act climax.

JERRY. Oh, the one I'm punk in?

MRS. DEAN. That designation would fit any of your scenes.

JERRY. Will you tell me what you want me to do?

MRS. DEAN. Do you know what Dora's Dilemma is?

JERRY. No, do you?

MRS. DEAN. You've been playing in this piece for two weeks.

JERRY. You could play in this piece for two years and not know what it's about.

SMITH. [*Rushing at* JERRY.] Oh, is that so?

JERRY. I beg your pardon. Where am I worst?

MRS. DEAN. Words fail me! [*To* ROSENBAUM.] You talk to him.

[*She sinks on the couch, utterly worn out.* SMITH *joins* MISS DONAHUE *on the window-seat. She tries to console him.* BETTY *sits in the chair be-*

side the desk on which TOMPKINS *is seated.* MISS FARRINGTON, MISS TOBY *and* BILLINGS *leave their post of observation at the door at the left.* EFFIE *appears yawning, and goes to the chair where* SMITH *has been seated and huddled in* JERRY'S *overcoat, falls asleep.* JERRY, *eager to do what is asked of him, stands at the centre.* ROSENBAUM *advances on him belligerently.*

ROSENBAUM. You're afraid your firm will miss the bonds. You've come here to Chapman's library to get them. You're desperate.

JERRY. Why am I desperate?

[ROSENBAUM *looks at him. He gives it up and joins* MRS. DEAN *on the couch.* SMITH *rushes down to* JERRY.

SMITH. Great Heavens! Didn't you tell your mother earlier in this act that if you didn't get the bonds you'd commit suicide?

MRS. DEAN. [*Bitterly.*] Sometimes I wish he had.

BETTY. [*Rising impatiently, goes to* JERRY.] Oh, never mind what it all means. It's a part, Jerry,—act it.

[*She returns to the chair wearily.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Rising.*] We'll take the scene from "Behind the curtain."

[MISS DONAHUE *leaves the window-seat and disappears to the right,* MISS TOBY *and* MISS FARRINGTON *appear at the back of the window going towards the left.* SMITH *takes a position at the back of the couch.* ROSENBAUM *remains seated on it.* MRS. DEAN *goes to the right to watch the scene.* JERRY *goes up to the window-seat,* TOMPKINS *to the door,* BETTY *following him.*

TOMPKINS. Oh, Billings, Brinkley! On stage.

BILLINGS. Coming.

[BILLINGS *and* JOHNNY *enter.*

TOMPKINS. Ready everybody. The struggle in the dark.

[BETTY *takes her position at the door, her back to the*

spectators, her hand outstretched towards the button that is supposed to switch on the electric lights. BILLINGS *stands behind the desk,* JOHNNY *in front of it.*

JOHNNY. [*Very dramatically.*] Bla-bla-bla—long speech ending in "Behind the curtain——"

JERRY. [*Standing on the window-seat.*] Where's my overcoat?

[*He jumps off the seat.*

MRS. DEAN. How should I know? Ask the stage manager.

TOMPKINS. Now I'm the coat room boy.

JOHNNY. Heaven preserve us from these amateurs.

[SMITH *looks for it at the back of the couch,* ROSENBAUM *underneath it,* MRS. DEAN *under the chair at the right,* TOMPKINS *behind the window-seat.* BETTY, BILLINGS *and* JOHNNY *wait, resignedly.*

ROSENBAUM. I paid sixty dollars for that coat.

BETTY. [*Impatiently.*] Jerry, where did you put it?

JERRY. I don't know.

SMITH. Is there any damn thing you do know?

BETTY. Effie's got it on.

JOHNNY. That woman would sleep anywhere. [*He goes to her and shakes her.*] Brooklyn! All out!

EFFIE. Why did you wake me? I dreamt the play was a hit!

[*Everybody is disgusted.* JERRY *laughs, but subsides as they all turn and stare at him witheringly.* EFFIE *rises,* JOHNNY *grabs the coat and takes it to* JERRY *who puts it on.* EFFIE, *yawning and shivering with the cold, starts for the door at the left.* SMITH *crossing to the chair where* EFFIE *has been seated, glowers at her.* EFFIE *tosses her head and goes.* MRS. DEAN *is leaning against the proscenium arch at the right,* ROSENBAUM *beside her.* BETTY, BILLINGS *and* JOHNNY *take their places.* TOMPKINS

stands in the door at the left, holding the manuscript. JERRY *starts for the window.*

JERRY. [*Stopping.*] Where are the bonds?

JOHNNY. [*Giving him the bonds which he has taken from the desk.*] You ought to have a nurse!

TOMPKINS. [*Wearily.*] Ready, ready!

[JERRY *gets up on the window-seat.*

JOHNNY. [*Very dramatically.*] Bla-bla—long speech, ending with "Behind the curtain"——

JERRY. Where's the curtain?

MRS. DEAN. We will simulate the curtain.

JERRY. What do I do to the curtain?

BETTY. Oh, pretend there's one there.

TOMPKINS. [*Despairingly.*] Ready!

JERRY. Now wait a minute, there's going to be a curtain?

ROSENBAUM. [*Fiercely.*] Of course, of course!

JERRY. No harm in asking. I was only introduced to this window tonight.

[*He gets in position to leap from the window-seat.*

TOMPKINS. Ready, Johnny?

JOHNNY. Wait a minute. [*To* JERRY.] Have you *got* everything?

JERRY. [*Feeling in the pocket of his overcoat.*] Yes.

JOHNNY. Bla-bla-bla long speech ending with "behind the curtain."

BETTY. [*At door.*] Business. Button. Lights out—bing!

[*On the word "bing" she presses the button on the right side of the door. The lights do not go out. Everybody on the stage looks up to see what is the matter with the lights.* BETTY *comes down impatiently.*

BETTY. Oh mother, why don't the lights go out?

ROSENBAUM. Call the electrician!

TOMPKINS. [*Calling.*] Goldman!

HICKSON. [*Appearing at the rear door.*] The electrician's gone to breakfast.

[*He goes.*

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Belden, we'll——

JERRY. We will simulate the darkness. I get you, I get you.

BETTY. [BETTY *returns to the door, repeating the business of pushing the button.*] Business, button, lights out, bing!

[BILLINGS *starts for the window.* JERRY *springs off the window-seat. They seize each other fiercely, and struggle.* BETTY *rushes behind them to the back of the couch, and begins, apparently, to look for something. She is being very dramatic. Suddenly she stops and runs toward* MRS. DEAN.

BETTY. [*Shrieking.*] Mother! Mother! He's got *on* the overcoat. [*She rushes at* JERRY *in a fury.*] Jerry Belden, if you forget to take that overcoat off tonight, behind that curtain and leave it there for me [*pointing to the back of the couch*] I'll die right here.

[*She sits on the couch, her head buried in her hands.*

JERRY. [*Going to her.*] That's all right. I won't forget it, but if I do, don't worry!

[BILLINGS *is standing by the desk.* JERRY *leaps through the air and lands on him. They begin to struggle fiercely.* ROSENBAUM *rushes and grabs* JERRY; MRS. DEAN, *following him, tries to get to* JERRY SMITH *runs up and seizes* BILLINGS. *They try to stop the struggle, but as it is the one thing that* JERRY *can do well, he continues and pulls everybody to and fro in the room. Finally it penetrates to him that they want to tell him something, so he stops.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Shrieking at* JERRY.] It's her stealing the bonds out of your overcoat when you are being searched that is the big moment of the act.

ROSENBAUM. [*Raging.*] If you have the coat on, how is she going to get them?

SMITH. [*Wildly.*] The overcoat's the plot of my piece.

JERRY. [*Placidly.*] All right, all right! No need to get excited. I'll take it off.

[*He takes off the overcoat, puts it on the back of the couch and starts for the window-seat.* MRS. DEAN, *very much shaken, moves away, supported on one side by* ROSENBAUM, *and on the other by* SMITH. *It is the one moment in which the three are in accord.*

SMITH. Can you beat it! Forgot to take off the overcoat!

ROSENBAUM. You'll never get your curtain down tonight if he does it.

MRS. DEAN. If I had the strength to do it, I'd strangle him now.

TOMPKINS. [*Resignedly.*] Ready! Ready!

[BETTY, BILLINGS *and* JOHNNY *again take their positions.* ROSIE *and* MRS. DEAN *go over to the right.* SMITH *to his chair at the left. They wait.* JERRY *starts to get on the window-seat, stops and comes down.*

JERRY. Excuse me, I'll tell you what rattles me. It's just going over bits of the scene. I don't know where I'm at to have somebody say—"bla-bla-bla—long speech ending in 'Behind the curtain.'" It gets my nanny. Now if we could only go over the whole thing once.

MRS. DEAN. Well, I suppose——

BETTY. [*Coming down angrily.*] We haven't done the last act yet. I want a few hours' sleep before the performance.

[*She returns to the door.*

JERRY. It's easy enough for you people, but I'm not an actor.

SMITH. I should say not!

JERRY Say, you're not any more stuck on me than I am on myself.

[MAGGINIS *enters from the rear door yawning. He looks up at the ceiling and then calls to the men in the "flies."*

MAGINNIS. Hey you, come on down with yer back lines, yer back lines, you dope!

JERRY. [*Turning to* MAGINNIS.] Are you talking to me?

MAGGINIS. No, I don't talk to actors!

[*The ceiling is lowered into place with a rush, and* MAGGINIS *goes.*

JERRY. Oh, let her go!

BETTY. Business—door—button—lights out—bing!

[JERRY *dashes out from the window and throws the overcoat on the back of the couch.* BETTY *runs to get the bonds from the pocket.* BILLINGS *rushes at* JERRY, *who grabs him and they begin to rehearse in plain view an old fashioned "struggle in the dark" in which violent noise is more important than violent action. With* JERRY'S *assistance,* BILLINGS *vaults lightly in the air and* JERRY *holds him above his head, then falls slowly backward with* BILLINGS *on top of him, both grunting loudly.*

BILLINGS. Are you all right?

JERRY. Yes. Choke me.

[BILLINGS *does so and* JERRY *emits sounds of strangling. They roll over.* JERRY, *who is on top, rises and standing over* BILLINGS, *takes him by the shoulders and slams him gently up and down two or three times as* BILLINGS *groans and imitates the sound of a falling body by knocking loudly on the floor with his heel.*

JERRY. Are you comfortable?

BILLINGS. Oh, very!

[JERRY *pulls* BILLINGS *up on his feet, then turns him around, his back to the desk, and begins to back him towards it.*

JERRY. One—two—three—slap!

[*He slaps* BILLINGS' *open hand which* BILLINGS *holds up to the left side of his face.* BILLINGS *groans.*

JERRY. One—two—three—slap—— [*The same "business" is repeated.* BILLINGS *groans very loudly. They back to the right of the desk.* JERRY, *holding* BILLINGS *up very carefully, pushes a desk blotter and the phone out of the way, then lays* BILLINGS *very gently on the top of the desk.*] I'm not hurting you?

BILLINGS. Not at all, old dear!

[JERRY *slaps the desk loudly with his right hand.* BILLINGS *groans frightfully.* JERRY *pulls* BILLINGS *up on his feet.* BILLINGS *pushes* JERRY *lightly away.* JERRY *staggers backwards wildly to the right.* JOHNNY *points at him dramatically.*

JOHNNY. "Search him!"

BILLINGS. "Put up your hands! [JERRY *hesitates.* BETTY *gets the bonds out of the overcoat pocket.*] Put up your hands!"

[*He points the revolver at* JERRY, *who puts up his hands.* BETTY *rushes down between* JERRY *and* BILLINGS *to the centre, making a picture with the bonds held high over her head in her right hand.*

BETTY. "Stop! Here are the bonds! I am the thief!"

TOMPKINS. Curtain!

[*He imitates with a downward motion of his hand the falling of the curtain.* BETTY, JOHNNY *and* BILLINGS *"hold the picture," tensely dramatic in their attitudes and expressions.* JERRY *turns to the front and grins idiotically, destroying the effect of the climax. The others see him and "break the picture,"* BETTY *sitting in the window-seat,* JOHNNY *in the chair, in front of the desk,* TOMPKINS *on the desk,* BILLINGS *in the chair at the right of the desk,* SMITH *slumps despairingly in his chair at the left,* MRS. DEAN *on the couch and beside her* ROSENBAUM *holding her hand. Their backs are turned to*

JERRY, *who is so awful they cannot bear to look at him.* JERRY *looks at them, smiling a little wistfully. There is a pause, then* JERRY *worried, almost frightened, joins* BETTY *on the window-seat. She refuses to talk to him.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising, beckoning to* SMITH.] Well, what do you think?

SMITH. [*Meeting him.*] Terrible!

MRS. DEAN. [*Going to them.*] I don't believe we can open with him.

SMITH. Every time he comes on he takes the child of my brain and simply chokes it to death.

ROSENBAUM. Let's take it from his first entrance. Maybe he can work into it. Children, we'll take it over from Jerry's entrance.

[SMITH, ROSENBAUM *and* MRS. DEAN *return to their places at the left and at the right.* JOHNNY *sits in the chair in front of the desk.* BILLINGS *goes.*

BETTY. Oh dear!

JERRY. Now wait a minute. This is the place that I wear the overcoat?

MRS. DEAN. [*Angrily.*] Yes.

JERRY. Good.

TOMPKINS. [*Calling.*] Oh, Hickson, ready with your door slam.

HICKSON. [*Off stage.*] All right.

[TOMPKINS *goes out the rear door, shutting it.*

BETTY. [*Indifferently.*] Business—bonds—door. [*She opens the rear door. As she does so "a door slam" is heard off stage.*] [*Dramatically.*] "My God! Henderson!"

[*She looks around wildly, then running to the desk, sits beside it and falls forward across it as though fainting.*

TOMPKINS. [*Entering as* HENDERSON *looks at her, then rushes off, crying.*] "Help! Help! Help!"

[JERRY *enters from the window, wearing a light overcoat. He sees* BETTY.

JERRY. "Dora! Dora! What's happened?"

BETTY. [*Rushing to him wildly.*] "Dick! Dick! Here are your bonds!"

[*She puts the bonds in the pocket of* JERRY's *overcoat.* JERRY *puts his arms about her carelessly.*

JERRY. [*In a spiritless sing-song.*] "Oh Dora, you have saved my honour."

[BETTY *pushes* JERRY *away from her and sits on the desk, her back to him.* JOHNNY *throws himself disgustedly in the chair at the front of the desk.* TOMPKINS *enters the rear door and falls in the armchair at the left.* SMITH *collapses utterly.* ROSENBAUM *staggers to the proscenium arch at the right, burying his head in his arms.* JERRY, *bewildered, walks to the door at the right.* MRS. DEAN *rises, staggers towards* ROSENBAUM, *who has turned and advanced to meet her.* ROSENBAUM *supports her in his arms.*

MRS. DEAN. This is awful! Awful!

ROSENBAUM. Can't you show him?

MRS. DEAN. I'll try. Mr. Belden, stand down, please. See if you can get a faint glimmering by watching me. [JERRY, *frightened by her tone, comes down, giving her a wide berth and in doing so stumbles into the footlight trough. He scrambles out and stands watching her.*] Ready, Betty.

BETTY. [*Turning around.*] Oh, let Mr. Tompkins stand for me. I'm so tired.

TOMPKINS. I can't and give the cue.

[*He goes.*

ROSENBAUM. I'll do it for you, Betty.

[BETTY *starts towards the right.* JERRY *meets her.*

JERRY. I'm awfully sorry, Betty.

BETTY. [*Stamping her foot.*] You didn't even try.

[*She sits in the chair near the fireplace.*

JERRY. [*Following her.*] Well, I knew the words.

[*Betty turns her back to him.* JERRY *leans against the proscenium arch, utterly disconsolate. The company and stage hands, learning that* ROSENBAUM *and* MRS. DEAN *are going to rehearse the scene, take points of vantage to see them.* MISS TOBY *and* MISS FARRINGTON *enter at the right.* MISS TOBY *sits on the table below the door,* MISS FARRINGTON *leaning against it.* MISS DONAHUE *sits on the window-seat,* M'GINNIS, HICKSON *and* STEVE *stand at the back of the window.* EFFIE, GOLDMAN *and* BILLINGS *appear in the door at the left.* SMITH *remains seated in his chair,* JOHNNY *at the desk.* TOMPKINS *is in the wings at the left waiting for his cue to enter as* HENDERSON. MRS. DEAN *in* JERRY'S *part of* DICK, *climbs on the window-seat,* ROSENBAUM *in* BETTY'S *part of* DORA, *gets the bonds. Both of them are very serious in their intention but highly ludicrous in the result as they are naturally quite unfitted physically for the hero and the heroine of* "DORA'S DILEMMA." ROSENBAUM, *forgetting the cigar in his mouth, imitates* BETTY'S *stage "business" at the desk, then backs up towards the rear door. He opens it. The necessary "cue" of a closing door is not heard.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Irritably.*] Where's that door slam?

[HICKSON *rushes off right.* MAGINNIS *rushes off left. Immediately there are two door slams heard off left followed by two off right.*

ROSENBAUM. My God! Four Hendersons!

[*He staggers down to the table, falls into the chair, still imitating* BETTY.

TOMPKINS. [*Entering the rear door, sees the "situation."*] "Help! Help!"

[*The first "Help" is given loudly, the other two die away as* TOMPKINS, *wishing to see the scene, does*

not go as demanded by the "business," but remains in the doorway.

MRS. DEAN. [*Rushing down from the window.*] "Dora! Dora! What's happened?"

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising, and meeting her at the centre.*] "Dick! Dick! Here are your bonds!"

MRS. DEAN. [*Dramatically.*] "Dora! Dora! You have saved my honour!"

[MRS. DEAN *clasps* ROSENBAUM *in her arms fervently, crushing his hat over his eyes, forcing it to an angle of 45 degrees.* ROSENBAUM *blindly tries with his left hand to find the pocket in* MRS. DEAN'S *clothes in order to imitate* BETTY'S *"business" of placing the bonds in* JERRY'S *overcoat. The company, stifling their laughter, fall out of the room.* SMITH *is almost fainting with horror.* BETTY, *stuffing her handkerchief in her mouth, rocks with mirth.* JERRY *is not so discreet, for shrieking with laughter, he advances to* ROSENBAUM *and* MRS. DEAN, *who at the sound of his glee have started apart.*

JERRY. You see, *you* forgot the overcoat altogether—oh, I beg your pardon, but you were so funny.

ROSENBAUM. [*Angrily.*] Funny! You ought to see yourself!

SMITH. [*Rushing to* JERRY.] Funny! You hold my play up to ridicule, kill it, and think it's funny!

[*He starts to the door at the left.*

ROSENBAUM. Where are you going?

SMITH. Home. Will you do me one favour?

ROSENBAUM. What?

SMITH. Take my name off the programme.

[*He goes, slamming the door. The noise of the row attracts the notice of the company, who come running back to their former positions in time to hear* SMITH'S *farewell speech. There is a pause.* MRS. DEAN, *at first speechless with rage, breaks into a fierce tirade.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Indignantly.*] The base ingrate! He ought to be on his knees to me. To think how I've worked on his piffling play! I ask you all, could anybody who heard him read it, recognise it now? [*Tearfully.*] If it hadn't been for me, this play would never have seen New York. Nobody believes in it but me. I've worked myself into an untimely grave to give you all a season's run, and you're all against me. [*Crying.*] You're all against me, every last one of you! I'm just one lone woman against a band of pessimistic knockers. I can't stand any more!

[*She goes, sobbing.* BETTY *rises to follow her but is stopped by* EFFIE, *who runs out calling "Matilda, Matilda." The company, who have all been unanimous in their dislike of* MRS. DEAN, *have a revulsion of feeling now that she is apparently at the end of her endurance. Talking quietly and sympathetically everyone disappears, leaving* BETTY *almost in tears and* JERRY *remorseful.*

BETTY. Poor mother! She's utterly worn out!

JERRY. I never thought she'd take it so much to heart.

BETTY. It will just about kill her if it doesn't get over!

JERRY. Oh don't, Betty, you make me feel like a dog!

[*He moves away.*

BETTY. [*Following him.*] Why, Jerry, you're doing the best you can. It isn't your fault! I thought the play was awful when we read it, and when it didn't go on the road, I begged mother not to let Rosie bring it in, but she's mad about it. Of course, she can't see any further than that my part is good. Poor mother!

JERRY. [*Turning to her and taking her hands.*] Look here, Betty, if you ever heard that I'd done something that was—rotten—would you love me just the same?

BETTY. But you couldn't. Besides, I'd love you whatever you did!

JERRY. You'll remember that, won't you? Promise.

BETTY. Cross my heart! [*She does so.*] But why are you so serious?

JERRY. Oh, it's nothing! We'll make it up to her.

BETTY. To mother. Make up what?

JERRY. We'll be mighty kind to her if anything happens to disappoint her, won't we?

BETTY. Why, of course! But you are always kind to her. I'll go to her now.

[*She kisses him and starts to the door.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Entering.*] Are you two scrapping now?

BETTY. No. Jerry's worried for fear the piece may fail.

[*She goes.*

ROSENBAUM. What? Say, what's happened to you?

JERRY. Mrs. Dean's got me going, that's all. I almost wish it wasn't going to fail!

ROSENBAUM. Well, you'll lose your wish.

JERRY. Looks like a sure-fire failure, eh?

ROSENBAUM. [*Smiling.*] I made arrangements today to invest that five thousand dollars.

JERRY. I didn't know. You seemed so interested tonight. I thought perhaps you liked it.

ROSENBAUM. I can't help it. I seem to like anything when it gets as far as the dress rehearsal.

JERRY. [*Starting to follow* BETTY.] Well, I'm going to make a clean breast of my scheme to Betty.

ROSENBAUM. [*Stopping him.*] Don't speak to her, not before we open! She'll make a hit. That's all her mother wants. She'll blame the play. And just think of the things she'll say about the author!

[MRS. DEAN *returns, wiping her eyes,* BETTY *and* EFFIE *accompanying her.* TOMPKINS *appears at the rear door.*

BETTY. Now, mother, what do you want us to do?

MRS. DEAN. We'll rehearse the curtain calls on this act.

TOMPKINS. Everybody on stage, please. First call, everybody. [MRS. DEAN *goes to the right and* ROSENBAUM *to the left.* BETTY *and* JERRY *take their positions in the exact centre,* JERRY *to the right of her.* JOHNNY *enters and*

comes to the left of BETTY.] [*Irritably.*] Miss Donahue, you're over there.

[*He pushes her into place next to* JOHNNY, *shoves* MISS TOBY *next to her.* MRS. DEAN *is arranging the other end of the line.* BILLINGS *gets into the wrong place.*

MRS. DEAN. [*Impatiently to* BILLINGS.] Haven't you *any* dramatic instinct?

[*She grabs* BILLINGS *and puts him next to* EFFIE, *then returns to the extreme right.* TOMPKINS *takes his place. The line-up for the "call" from left to right is* MISS TOBY, BILLINGS, EFFIE, JERRY, BETTY, JOHNNY, MISS DONAHUE, TOMPKINS *and* MISS FARRINGTON.

TOMPKINS. Curtain up! [*He gives the signal for the imaginary curtain. Everybody bows and smiles.*] Curtain down! [*Everybody looks bored. This business is repeated for all the curtain calls.*] Second call—Principals.

[*All run off excepting* JOHNNY, EFFIE, JERRY, BETTY *and* BILLINGS, *and* TOMPKINS, *who joins* ROSENBAUM.

MRS. DEAN. Mr. Billings, we said—*principals!*

BILLINGS. Quite so.

ROSENBAUM. Get off, you're a "bit"!

[BILLINGS *goes grumbling.*

TOMPKINS. Curtain up! [*They repeat the bowing and smiling.*] Down! Third call. Miss Dean, Mr. Belden and Brinkley. [EFFIE *runs off quickly.*] Up! [*Business as before.*] Down. Fourth. Miss Dean and Belden [JOHNNY *goes.*] Up. [*The same business.*] Down.

MRS. DEAN. [*Proudly.*] And now—Betty.

[JERRY *runs out the rear door.* BETTY *goes up the centre carrying her train. She starts down stage to the left, dropping her train carefully. Then* BETTY *stops as though surprised by a burst of applause. She bows.*

MRS. DEAN. Shrink, darling, shrink! [BETTY *goes up the stage shrinking.*] Hold out your hand.

[BETTY *holds out her hand as though desirous of bringing someone to share her triumph. When she gets to the rear door,* JERRY *jumps on and takes her outstretched hand.* BETTY *is annoyed.*

BETTY. [*Complainingly.*] Mother!

MRS. DEAN. [*Furiously.*] Get off! Get off! [JERRY *hurries out.*] Now darling, if those ushers earn their money, drag on the company one by one. Save Effie until the last. I'll show you. Oh Effie! [BETTY *moves away and watches* MRS. DEAN, *who, smiling sweetly, gambols across to the door at the right.* EFFIE *is a trifle slow in coming on.* MRS. DEAN *jerks her through the door.*] Oh, hurry up! [*She takes* EFFIE, *who is very sulky, to the centre, makes a deep bow to her, then putting her arm around* EFFIE, *turns to* BETTY.] See, dear, this is always good for another one.

ROSENBAUM. Smile, Effie, smile!

EFFIE. Do I have to rehearse the smile?

[*She smiles stagily, looks angrily at* MRS. DEAN, *then stalks off.*

MRS. DEAN. Now, darling, look for the author. [*She trips around from left to right looking off in the wings for an imaginary author, then advancing to the footlights, smiles coyly at an imaginary audience.*] I don't know where the author is. [*To* BETTY *in a business-like tone.*] Try it, darling.

[BETTY *imitates the "business" of looking for the author and in doing so sees* ROSENBAUM.

BETTY. Do I look for Rosie, too?

MRS. DEAN. [*Disgustedly.*] No. He'll be out in front applauding. And now the speech.

BETTY. [BETTY, *advancing to the centre, smiles very brightly.*] I don't know where the author is.

MRS. DEAN. [*Very kittenishly.*] Be coy, Betty, be coy!

BETTY. [*Imitating her.*] I don't know where the author

is. I can't make a speech, except to say that we're all very happy and we've worked very hard——

ROSENBAUM. Cut that out. They don't give a damn how hard you've worked.

BETTY. We're all very happy. [*Very brightly*] and I thank you.

MRS. DEAN. [*Tearfully.*] Cry, Betty, cry.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] I thank you. I thank you.

[*She backs up the stage bowing.*

The curtain is lowered to indicate a lapse of time.

SCENE TWO: *The First Night*

After the curtain falls there is an instant of time, then ROSENBAUM *appears in the left upper stage box of the theatre. He looks over its railing at the audience, then sits with his back to the stage mentally "counting the house."* MRS. DEAN, *following him, looks over the railing at the audience and then seats herself facing the stage.* SMITH *comes in and, sitting between them, nervously crumples a programme.* ROSENBAUM *is in a dinner jacket,* SMITH *in evening clothes,* MRS. DEAN *in a wrap and over her head a scarf which she removes.*

The idea sought to be conveyed is that the curtain is rising on the final scenes in the third act during the first performance of "Dora's Dilemma."

The curtain rises to disclose a completely furnished stage setting representing the library in the ROBERT CHAPMAN *home.* EFFIE, *as* MRS. BENNETT, *is seated on the couch.* BETTY, *as* DORA CHAPMAN, *is speaking to her.*

DORA. But, Mrs. Bennett, has the firm missed the bonds?

MRS. BENNETT. Not yet, but if Dick does not restore them by ten o'clock tomorrow morning their loss will be discovered, and my son will be arrested and branded as a thief!

DORA. My God! But why did Dick give those securities to my husband?

MRS. BENNETT. Mr. Chapman said he wanted the use of ten United States bonds for just twelve hours. He promised faithfully to return them to Dick tonight. He's failed him again. Now Dick has gone home hoping to find them there.

DORA. How did you learn all this?

MRS. BENNETT. Dick's been anxious all the evening. You noticed it. I saw him come in here, followed him and found him ransacking that desk. Then I made him tell me.

DORA. But why should Dick run this risk?

MRS. BENNETT. Because of you.

DORA. Because of me?

MRS. BENNETT. Your husband threatened him!

DORA. What about?

MRS. BENNETT. A divorce suit, naming Dick as co-respondent.

DORA. That's absurd. He knows it isn't true.

MRS. BENNETT. The coupling of your names would be enough to ruin you both.

DORA. The beast! To think of all the wrongs and humiliations that I have suffered in silence and then to threaten to drag me down, to ruin the man I love! Oh, I'll confess it. I do love your son. But you don't believe this of Dick and me?

MRS. BENNETT. [*Taking* DORA's *hands.*] No, no, I've suspected that my son loved you, and that you loved him. That's why I waited here after the others had gone, to implore you to save him.

DORA. I will. I must! I'll find some way to get those bonds.

[*Enter quickly* JOHNNY, *as* CHAPMAN, *from the rear door. He wears a business suit and carries a bag. He stops at the sight of the women.*

CHAPMAN. Oh, good evening. [MRS. BENNETT *rises.*] Oh, don't let me drive you away.

[*He goes down to the desk and puts the bag on the end of it.*

DORA. Mrs. Bennett was about to leave. Will you ring for Henderson?

[CHAPMAN *pushes the button on the desk. It rings off stage.*

MRS. BENNETT. My son has been looking for you all evening.

CHAPMAN. [*Frightened.*] Is he here?

MRS. BENNETT. No, he's gone home.

CHAPMAN. [*Relieved.*] Make my apologies. Tell him I was delayed unexpectedly. That I'll see him in the morning.

MRS. BENNETT. [*Eagerly.*] Early?

CHAPMAN. [*Opening the bag.*] Nine o'clock at my office.

[TOMPKINS *enters as* HENDERSON.

DORA. Henderson, Mrs. Bennett's carriage.

[MRS. BENNETT *goes, followed by* DORA. CHAPMAN *crosses to the window where he stands beside the drawn curtains looking out.* DORA *returns.*

CHAPMAN. Dora, Dora, come here quickly. [DORA *crosses in front of* CHAPMAN *to the window.*] Do you see anybody out there?

DORA. A policeman!

CHAPMAN. Does he seem to be watching the house?

DORA. No.

CHAPMAN. Anyone else?

DORA. No.

CHAPMAN. Sure?

DORA. Yes.

CHAPMAN. [*Going to the desk quickly.*] Dora, you've got to help me.

DORA. Help you? How?

CHAPMAN. Someone I can trust must sail on the *Mauretania* tonight with this.

[*He indicates the bag on the desk.*

DORA. What have you done?

CHAPMAN. Unless late tonight when I give the alarm with this [*He takes a revolver out of his pocket*], I can be found here chloroformed [*He takes a bottle out of his pocket and puts it on the desk*], the safe in this desk opened, robbed, they can send me up.

DORA. Oh, Bob! Bob!

CHAPMAN. I was going to make a getaway, but I can't. The secret service men are watching me. Will you go?

DORA. I can't. I can't!

CHAPMAN. You'll be all right. I'll join you as soon as I can. There's plenty of money in that bag, and these ten United States Bonds are as good as cash. Will you go through with this for me?

[DORA *recognises the bonds which he displays to her as those* DICK *has given* CHAPMAN.

DORA. Yes, yes.

CHAPMAN. Good.

DORA. [*Falling into the chair at the desk, as though fainting.*] Oh, oh, oh.

CHAPMAN. What is it?

DORA. I feel faint—the shock—some water—downstairs—the dining room. [*The moment* CHAPMAN *goes she shows that the faint was pretended and stealthily rising gets the telephone.*] Central, central; get me 84 Bryant, quickly, quickly. [*She waits anxiously.*] Hello, 84 Bryant? Oh, is that you, Dick. Can you hear me? I've got your bonds. Come here at once, come through the garden to the library window!

[*As* BETTY *is replacing the receiver,* CHAPMAN *enters.*

CHAPMAN. To whom were you telephoning?

DORA. [*Frightened, then recovering.*] A wrong number!

[*She goes slowly up to the window to open it.*

CHAPMAN. [*Watching her suspiciously.*] What are you doing?

DORA. It's so close in here.

[*She opens the window.*

CHAPMAN. [*Going to the desk.*] Wrong number, eh? [DORA *watches him anxiously. He picks up the telephone.*] Central, what was that number just called from here? [DORA *starts from the window to him.*] 84 Bryant! [DORA *gives faint cry.*] Huh—I thought so. [*He replaces the receiver.*]

What did you have to say to Bennett? Come, out with it!

DORA. [*Hesitatingly.*] Nothing. I simply telephoned good-bye.

CHAPMAN. I wonder if you're putting up a job on me?

DORA. Don't be absurd. I must hurry. [*She starts to the door.*] We've no time to lose.

CHAPMAN. You're anxious to go, aren't you? Maybe Bennett's waiting for you? Is he?

DORA. Of course not.

CHAPMAN. What did his mother tell you tonight?

DORA. [*Hesitatingly.*] What could there be to tell?

[*She comes down to the back of the desk.*

CHAPMAN. By God, that's why you gave in! His mother told you about the bonds. You're going to give them to him.

[*He makes a rush for her.*

DORA. [*Picking up the revolver from the desk.*] Yes, I am. Give them to me.

[*She points the revolver at him across the desk.*

CHAPMAN. [*Backing away a step or two.*] What? You——

DORA. I'm not afraid of you, I mean this.

[CHAPMAN *opens the bag which is on the desk, takes out the package of United States Bonds, and throws them on the desk. As she reaches for them he jumps, grabs her wrist, gets the revolver, then takes the bonds forcibly from her, and puts them in the bag.* DORA *sinks on the chair at the desk.*

CHAPMAN. I might have known I couldn't trust you, I'll take a chance. I'll go myself, and you'll go with me.

DORA. I won't. I won't.

CHAPMAN. Oh yes you will, or I'll stay here and when Dick Bennett comes through that window——[DORA *gasps.*] Oh, that's why you opened it! I'll shoot him dead.

DORA. You wouldn't dare.

CHAPMAN. Dare? Invading the sanctity of my home. It mightn't be a bad idea at that. Wonder I didn't think of it instead of that chloroform stunt.

[*Sitting in the chair in front of the desk, he leans over and opens the safe, and begins to empty it of its contents.*

I could plant the robbery on him. How would you like that for your lover? [*He laughs.*] You thought you had me beat! Me! That's funny. That's damn funny.

[*He laughs, leaning back in his chair. At the mention of the word "chloroform"* DORA *takes the bottle from the desk and empties it on her handkerchief.* CHAPMAN *roars with laughter and says "Damn funny,"* DORA *thrusts the handkerchief over his mouth, grabs his right arm and brings it up back of the chair.* CHAPMAN *struggles.*

DORA. You'll go? You'll stay here and be caught like a rat in a trap. You can disgrace me, shame me, but you won't make the man I love a thief! I've beaten you, do you hear? You beast! I've beaten you!

[CHAPMAN'S *hand falling limply on the desk presses the button. The bell rings off stage.* BETTY *alarmed, listens, then dropping the handkerchief, she gets the bonds from the bag, and starts to leave when a door is heard to slam.*

DORA. My God! Henderson!

[*She looks wildly about, holding the bonds in front of her, and runs down to the chair at the desk and falls forward as though in a faint.*

HENDERSON. [*Entering, sees the situation, then goes quickly, calling.*] Help! Help! Help!

[JERRY, *as* DICK, *rushes in through the window.*

DICK. Dora, Dora! what's happened!

DORA. O Dick, here are your bonds.

DICK. O Dora, you have saved my honour.

DORA. He was going to run away, leave the country. I

chloroformed him. [*She puts the bonds in his overcoat pocket.*] Now, go, go.

[*A police whistle sounds faintly.*

DICK. Leave you? No.

DORA. You must. There are the police. They'll never suspect me. Oh go, for God's sake go. [*She pushes him towards the window. The police whistle is heard nearer.*] No, no, get behind that curtain.

[*She pushes* DICK *behind the curtain at the window and starts for the door.*

HENDERSON. [*Entering.*] Oh, Ma'am, are you all right?

DORA. Oh yes, yes.

[*Enter* BILLINGS *as a Policeman.*

POLICEMAN. What is it?

DORA. Help me out of here.

[HENDERSON *leads her towards the door.* CHAPMAN *has been coming out of his daze.*

CHAPMAN. Stop her. She robbed me!

POLICEMAN. Wait!

DORA. He doesn't know what he's saying. I'm his wife.

[*She tries to go.*

CHAPMAN. [*Rising.*] Stop her. Search her. She chloroformed me, robbed me. [*He turns toward the window and sees the curtain move.*] And get that man behind the curtain.

[DORA, *who is at the door, turns off the lights.* DICK *rushes out. He and the Policeman struggle*

CHAPMAN. Turn on those lights.

[*When the lights go up* DICK *is discovered wearing the overcoat with the bonds sticking out of the pocket, in plain view.* DORA *is at the couch looking wildly for the overcoat.*

CHAPMAN. Search him!

POLICEMAN. Put up your hands! Put up your hands!

[BILLINGS *sees the overcoat, and the bonds. He is paralysed. A stage wait occurs.*

MRS. DEAN. [*From the stage box.*] Great Heavens! He's got *on* the overcoat!

SMITH. [*From the stage box.*] I'll kill him!

[BILLINGS, JOHNNY, TOMPKINS *and* BETTY *become panic-stricken, losing their characterizations completely.* JERRY *suddenly realises what he has done but is unabashed.*

JERRY. Come on, search me. [BILLINGS *looks again at* JERRY, *then at* JOHNNY.] Come on, you big boob, search me!

[*He hesitates.* JERRY *jumps for him, knocks him down.*

BETTY. [*Wildly.*] What will I do? What will I do?

JERRY. Do. You'll come with me!

[*He dashes at* JOHNNY *who rushes off below the tormentor.* JERRY *then jumps on the desk, and leaps at* TOMPKINS, *who dodges. Then he grabs* BETTY *who has fainted and jumps out of the window.*

ROSENBAUM. [*From the box.*] Ring down, Ring down!

TOMPKINS. [*Rushing off below the tormentor.*] Ring down!

CURTAIN

THE FOURTH ACT

JERRY'S *apartment in a Studio building in New York,—a simply and attractively furnished room with a door at the left to the bedroom and another at the back to the hall. There is a fireplace at the right and extending from it into the room, its back to the spectator is a large couch covered with corduroy. Facing it is a comfortable wing chair and a table with a reading light. At the left is a window with a cushioned seat and in front of it a handsome table with writing materials, a lamp, a rack of books and silver boxes containing cigarettes. Behind the desk is a chair, in front of it a bench with a cushion of corduroy. Against the back wall is a Jacobean cabinet and a table with a lamp. Another table for newspapers and magazines stands at the left end of the couch. There are framed photographs on the walls, the mantel-piece, the tables and the desk, all of* BETTY *in various poses. Bright sunlight is streaming through the windows.*

WALTER, JERRY'S *man-servant, has placed the morning papers and the mail on the desk and is starting for the bedroom carrying the coat of a suit when the door opens and* JERRY *appears.*

JERRY. Good morning, Walters. What time is it?

WALTERS. Eleven o'clock. [*Offering* JERRY *his coat.*] Will you have your coat, sir?

JERRY. Yes. [*Taking off his lounging jacket.*] Did you get all the morning papers?

WALTERS. They're on the table, sir. Mr. Rosenbaum has been phoning. He'll be over later. [*He takes the lounging jacket and starts to go. At the door to the bedroom he*

stops.] Beg pardon for mentioning it, sir, but I hope "Dora's Dilemma" was a success last night.

JERRY. [*Angrily.*] Don't talk about it.

WALTERS. Oh no, sir. Thank you, sir.

[*He goes.* JERRY *takes a cigarette from a box on the table, and is getting a match, when there comes a knock at the door.*

JERRY. Come in. [JERRY *is lighting his cigarette, his back to the door, and does not see* BETTY *entering, carrying a suit case. She places it beside the door, then with a little sob comes towards* JERRY, *who, hearing the sound, turns and goes to her quickly.*] Betty! Good heavens, Betty, what's happened? What are you doing here? Where's your mother?

BETTY. Oh, stop asking me questions and kiss me.

[JERRY *takes her in his arms and kisses her.*

JERRY. There! Now tell me, what's happened?

BETTY. [*Surprised.*] Haven't you read the papers?

JERRY. I haven't had time.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] Mother will never let us get married now.

JERRY. Why?

BETTY. The play's a hit.

JERRY. [*Staggered.*] What!

BETTY. Look at the papers!

[*She gets a paper from a table at the end of the couch and hands it to him.*

JERRY. It can't be true! [*Reading.*] "The dramatic sensation of the century."

BETTY. What did I tell you?

[*She sits on the couch, her back to the spectators.*

JERRY. It can't be a success! Your mother had hysterics after I bawled up that third act finish.

[*He begins to read the review.*

BETTY. [*Crying.*] I know. She scolded me, too. I went home so happy. Then this morning the first paper I looked at said: "Not since Maude Adams took New York by storm

has any actress won such instant favour as Bettina Dean." I'd like to boil that man in oil.

[*She cries again.*

JERRY. [*Gloomily, from behind the newspaper.*] I was a hit too.

BETTY. The critics must be crazy. You were awful.

JERRY. But you saw what they wrote about me.

BETTY. Yes, one of them said—"Where has Jerome Belden been? Why have we been deprived of him all these years?"

JERRY. Listen to this son-of-a-gun—[*Reading*] "Not in the memory of the oldest playgoer has the New York stage given to us so charmingly unconventional an actor as Jerome Belden. Even the baldly melodramatic climax of the third act was handled by Mr. Belden with such utter disregard of conventional method and technique. . . ." What's technique?

BETTY. Something you struggle all your life to get, that makes the public tired when you give it to them. Oh, dear!

[*She sobs.*

JERRY. Don't, Betty, don't.

[*He sits on the couch beside her his back to the audience and takes her in his arms.*

BETTY. How can those critics be so kind when they can be so mean?

JERRY. Oh, maybe this is just newspaper talk.

BETTY. [*Releasing herself.*] Oh, I'm afraid they liked it. [*They turn, their arms on the back of the couch, looking directly at the spectators.*] I saw all the first-nighters applauding.

JERRY. Yes; the whole lodge was there.

BETTY. What lodge?

JERRY. The Ancient Order of Grave Diggers.

BETTY. They gave us fifteen curtain calls.

JERRY. Oh, that's just first-night stuff.

BETTY. No, if those Grave Diggers like a thing, they go out and rave about it.

[*She cries.* JERRY *turns and takes her in his arms, both again with their backs to the spectators.*

JERRY. Well, maybe it won't draw.

BETTY. Draw? Mother says it will run all season.

JERRY. Some plays run in New York for two years.

BETTY. Don't, Jerry, don't.

[*She sobs.*

JERRY. Look at Monte Cristo!

BETTY. [*Sobbing wildly.*] And Rip Van Winkle!

JERRY. Oh, who'd pay to see this show?

BETTY. Go call up the box-office.

[JERRY *rises and goes to the telephone on the table at the left of the room.* BETTY *wipes her eyes.*

JERRY. Never thought of that. What's the number?

BETTY. 680 Bryant. Mother was 'phoning this morning.

[*She rises and follows* JERRY.

JERRY. Give me 680 Bryant.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] I'm the most miserable woman in the world.

JERRY. Don't take it so much to heart.

BETTY. Mother says it's absurd to talk of marriage in the face of this success.

JERRY. What? Busy? Call me.

[*He places the telephone on the table.*

BETTY. [*Despairingly.*] Surely they can't be telephoning for seats already?

[*She sinks on the bench beside the table.* JERRY *gets a chair and brings it towards her.*

JERRY. It's a judgment.

BETTY. What do you mean?

JERRY. Betty, I've a confession to make.

[*He hangs his head guiltily.*

BETTY. [*Alarmed.*] Jerry, don't tell me you've learned to like the stage.

JERRY. [*Despairingly sitting in the chair.*] No, worse than that.

BETTY. Nothing could be worse. Go on, tell me.

JERRY. [*In the manner of a stage confession.*] You remember the night Rosie made the proposition to star you?

BETTY. Yes, I'll never forget it or forgive him.

JERRY. Don't say that! I was responsible.

[*In deep despair he bows his head in his hands.*

BETTY. What?

JERRY. Yes. I furnished the backing.

BETTY. To make me a star? Why?

JERRY. [*Seriously.*] Because I loved you.

BETTY. [*Indignantly.*] Well, you had a nice way of showing it.

JERRY. Your mother had said it would be death to your career to be associated with a failure—well, I made up my mind you'd fail.

BETTY. You darling.

JERRY. Rosie had a lot of plays in his grip. I hadn't read any of them. I just picked this one out blindly, thinking, of course, that I'd pick a failure.

BETTY. Oh, Jerry, why didn't you leave the choice to Rosie?

JERRY. Why?

BETTY. It takes someone who knows about plays to pick a failure.

[*The telephone bell rings sharply.*

JERRY. [*Rushing to the telephone.*] Hello, 680 Bryant? I want a couple of seats for tonight. What? One in the fifteenth row. *Four weeks from Monday!* Oh, this is awful! [BETTY *sobs aloud.*] I'll never be able to live this down. I'll never dare to show my face at the Club again.

BETTY. And I'll never be Mrs. Jerome Belden now.

[JERRY *in his irritation is walking up and down; he stumbles over* BETTY'S *suit case, and gives it a vicious kick.*

JERRY. What the devil's that?

BETTY. [*Sniffling.*] That's mine.

JERRY. Oh, excuse me. [*He picks up the suit case, puts*

it tenderly and puts it on the chair beside the bench.] Yours? Where are you going?

BETTY. Nowhere. I've come to stay.

JERRY. Here?

BETTY. Yes.

JERRY. You can't do that. I'd forgotten. You oughtn't to be here now. How did you get up here?

BETTY. I gave the elevator boy five dollars.

JERRY. [*Growing agitated.*] Good Lord, did anyone downstairs see you?

BETTY. Yes, a lot of hall boys.

JERRY. I'll fix them. They didn't recognise you?

BETTY. I didn't wear a veil on purpose.

JERRY. [*Very agitatedly.*] Come, Betty, you must get out of here. Your mother might miss you, begin to look for you.

BETTY. She knows I'm here.

JERRY. What? Did you tell her?

BETTY. No, she went out early this morning, but I left a note.

[JERRY *frantic, takes* BETTY'S *hands and tries to draw her to her feet.*

JERRY. Then come on; if she finds you here, it will be terrible.

BETTY. [*Impatiently, pulling her hands away.*] I want her to find me here.

JERRY. She mustn't, Betty. Oh, I can't put it into words, but it's impossible. This is a bachelor apartment. Don't you appreciate the situation?

BETTY. Perfectly, I'm trying to be compromised. This is our only chance.

JERRY. Have you gone insane? I must take her to an alienist.

BETTY. [*Indignantly.*] If you loved me, you'd take me to a minister.

JERRY. I will, Betty, I will, after we see your mother. We played the game squarely, we won't sneak now.

BETTY. [*Crying.*] You don't love me any more.

JERRY. [*Taking her in his arms.*] I do, Betty, I do. I love you too much to let you marry me on the sly. Now, come on, dry your eyes, powder your nose, I'll order the car, we will drive to the Claremont, have some luncheon, then fortified, we'll call on mother, and read the riot act. [*The telephone rings.*] Hello, Mrs. Dean calling? Tell her I'm not in.

BETTY. [*Running to him.*] No—no. [*She speaks into the telephone.*] Ask her to come right up. [JERRY *tries to talk into the telephone.* BETTY *puts her hand across the mouthpiece.*] Say one word and I'll never speak to you again.

JERRY. This is going to take some explaining.

BETTY. Leave it to me.

JERRY. Your mother has every right to be furious. Every right to suspect me. Every right to prevent our marriage now.

BETTY. Just let her try it. [*There is a knock at the door.*] Quick, Jerry. [*She grabs him, throws herself into his arms, puts his arms around her.* JERRY *struggles.* BETTY *holds his hands firmly.*] Come in!

[MRS. DEAN *comes in, smilingly, arrayed in a gorgeous gown, a fur trimmed wrap of brocade, and a befeathered picture hat.*

MRS. DEAN. Good morning, children. Gaze on your mother—"Success," *Herald.*

[*She sweeps across in front of them to display her clothes.*

BETTY. Mother, don't you see us?

MRS. DEAN. There's nothing the matter with my eyesight.

BETTY. Mother, don't you see us? I'm compromised.

JERRY. No—no!

MRS. DEAN. [*Graciously.*] Bless my little girl. Your mother's here. I came as soon as I found the note. [*She strokes the fur on the sleeve of her wrap.*] Isn't it a lovely

piece of fur? They say it's sable, but I believe if you stroked it the wrong way, it'd put up its back and spit at you.

BETTY. Mother, will you pay attention to us?

MRS. DEAN. [*Parading across the room.*] My dear, don't be selfish. Let me enjoy my glad raiment. After I read the papers and 'phoned to the box-office, I said, "Matilda, go out and squander."

JERRY. The hit's gone to her head.

[*He sits on the bench.*

MRS. DEAN. I went straight to the dressmaker's. He says, I'm a perfect 40, the rascal. [*She giggles.*] Betty. [BETTY *goes to* MRS. DEAN, *who takes her aside and whispers.*] Everything underneath this is embroidered crêpe, and I wish you could see the lilies of the valley on my corsets!

BETTY. You look lovely. You know how glad I am that at last I see you looking——

MRS. DEAN. Rich and recherché.

BETTY. But it would have been more profitable and more to the point if instead of visiting the dressmaker's you had spent the time at the dramatic agencies.

MRS. DEAN. [*Majestically.*] My day for bending the knee to the dramatic agents is over. In future, they'll salaam to the mother of Bettina Dean. [BETTY, *shaking her head hopelessly, joins* JERRY *on the bench.*] I don't mind telling you two in strictest confidence that I'm going to be a power in this business. You saw what the newspapers said about my prediction of this play. I've always thought I could do a few things to Ibsen.

BETTY. [*To* JERRY.] Oh, it's hopeless!

[MRS. DEAN *pays no attention to him. She takes off her wrap and throws it over the couch on which she poses, then smiles in a stagey way at* JERRY.

JERRY. [*Coming to her.*] Mrs. Dean, this is serious.

MRS. DEAN. [*Contentedly.*] What's "serious"?

JERRY. On Saturday night Betty and I say a fond farewell to Dora and her Dilemma.

MRS. DEAN. What? Are you going mad?

BETTY. Yes, if being married is going mad.

[*She rises and goes to* JERRY.

MRS. DEAN. Married? Utterly impossible.

[BETTY *starts to talk;* JERRY *quiets her.*

JERRY. Let me talk, Betty. [BETTY *retires and sits on the bench by the table.*] Now, Mrs. Dean, you've kept us apart on the plea that you wanted to see Betty on Broadway. You can take a long lingering look at her for five more nights, and, of course, the usual matinées.

[*He sits on the bench beside* BETTY.

MRS. DEAN. [*Rising.*] What do you mean?

JERRY. Sunday we're married!

BETTY. No. today; I'll take no more chances.

JERRY. Suits me, darling. Then on Sunday we start on a still hunt for that farm with the chickens and the little calf.

MRS. DEAN. I won't permit it.

JERRY. Then I'm afraid we won't wait for the permit.

[ROSENBAUM *bursts in. He, like* MRS. DEAN, *exudes prosperity in every line of the palpably new morning coat, silk hat, boutonnière and gloves. He is beaming.*

ROSENBAUM. Well, we put it over. Didn't I always say it was a great play?

MRS. DEAN. Oh, Mr. Rosenbaum, I'm so glad you've come.

ROSENBAUM. I'd have been here before, but I was looking over the plans for the Rosenbaum Theatre.

MRS. DEAN. Talk to these children. I can't do anything with them. They're impossible.

[*She sits on the couch.*

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to her.*] You've got to make allowances after the hit they made last night. It's the artistic temperament.

MRS. DEAN. It's rank nonsense.

ROSENBAUM. It's the same thing. [*He goes to* JERRY

and sits on the chair beside the bench.] Jerry, didn't I always say it took just one fat part to make a Broadway star? Find out what they like in your personality and hand it to them. When you get old you keep on handing it to them and they think it's character acting.

MRS. DEAN. We've no time to listen to your theories of acting, even if you had any. They threaten to stop acting altogether on Saturday night.

ROSENBAUM. [*Rising.*] What?

JERRY. That's right.

[*He rises and goes to* ROSENBAUM.

ROSENBAUM. Never.

JERRY. [*Threateningly.*] Who's going to make me act?

MRS. DEAN. Nobody can do that, the critics notwithstanding.

ROSENBAUM. You don't dare quit.

JERRY. Don't I? You forget I own this show.

MRS. DEAN. What? You?

[*She rises.*

JERRY. Yes. I put up the money for "Dora's Dilemma."

MRS. DEAN. [*Indignantly.*] Why wasn't I told?

[*She glares at* ROSENBAUM, *who sneaks away.*

JERRY. Because I didn't want you to feel under obligations to me.

MRS. DEAN. Obligations? To furnish a few paltry thousands to put my daughter where she belongs? It was a privilege. Nevertheless, it was very generous of you. Betty, why don't you thank this noble-hearted man for all he has done for you?

BETTY. Thank him!

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to* MRS. DEAN.] Listen to her, she's as bad as Belden. But why expect gratitude from actors?

JERRY. Gratitude to you? [*He goes to him furiously.*] A fat lot you've done for us. Where's that failure you guaranteed me?

ROSENBAUM. [*Handing him a check.*] Here's your $5,000. I don't need it.

MRS. DEAN. What's this I hear about failure?

[ROSENBAUM *moves away again.*

JERRY. He promised me that it would fail. I relied on him.

MRS. DEAN. So, young man, you were going to put one over on mother?

JERRY. You've put it all over us. Let that satisfy you. But don't waste your time gloating. You'd better bend all your energies to finding two people to play our parts, and finding them quickly.

[*He picks up* BETTY'S *suit case.* BETTY *joins him, and they start toward the door.* MRS. DEAN *rushes to intercept them.*

MRS. DEAN. You children don't realise what you're doing. You can't leave this cast. You're both necessary to the success of the play.

ROSENBAUM. You leave it and it won't draw a cent.

JERRY. We don't need the money.

ROSENBAUM. What about me?

JERRY. Oh, you!

MRS. DEAN. What about the others? You can't stop the run of this play, throw all these people out of employment. Think of Effie and Johnnie. Would you take away their livelihood? Drive them back to a life of care and worry? You can't do that unless you're both marked with a wide streak of yellow.

BETTY. Jerry, I suppose we must think of the others.

[JERRY *throws down the suit case in disgust. There is a slight pause, then he advances on* ROSENBAUM *in a fury.*

JERRY. Why didn't you tell me if this was a success I could not get out of it without hurting other people? You promised me faithfully that my acting would kill it. Why didn't you warn me that I was in danger of making a hit?

ROSENBAUM. Oh, how did I know you had what gets across, whatever the damn thing is.

JERRY. [*Going to* MRS. DEAN.] If I stick to this thing—— [BETTY *protests.*] I don't say I will. I'll do it on one condition, Mrs. Dean, that you withdraw your opposition to my marriage with Betty.

ROSENBAUM. [*Going to* JERRY.] You marry Betty over my dead body.

JERRY. [*Shaking his fist in* ROSENBAUM'S *face.*] Oh, I'd go to the chair for you.

[*He goes and sits on the table, his back to them.*

BETTY. I'll play Dora and her old Dilemma with a wedding ring or not at all.

[*She joins* JERRY *and sits with her back to them.*

ROSENBAUM. Mrs. Dean, are you going to stand there and see them ruin me?

MRS. DEAN. Ruin us?

ROSENBAUM. Who's going to pay $2 to see a man make love to his own wife? [*He runs across.*] Oh, Betty, be reasonable. I'll make a great actress of you.

MRS. DEAN. I've done that already, Mr. Rosenbaum.

ROSENBAUM. Oh, Betty, don't do this! Stick to me! To show you the kind of fellow I am, I'll let you both do Shakespeare.

JERRY. [*Furiously, jumping off table and going to* ROSENBAUM.] Shakespeare! You've done enough for me. Don't you think you can put me in tights.

BETTY. I have an idea. Why couldn't we be married quietly?

ROSENBAUM. [*Scornfully.*] Quietly? What can you do in New York quietly?

BETTY. No one need know.

ROSENBAUM. The reporters would get it in a minute. There's a bunch of them downstairs now.

JERRY. Why?

ROSENBAUM. I brought them around to interview you.

JERRY. [*Going quickly to the telephone at the end of the*

desk.] Hello, is this the office? Send those reporters up to Mr. Belden's room at once. Yes, at once. [BETTY *looks at* JERRY *bewildered,* ROSIE *and* MRS. DEAN, *horrified.* JERRY *goes over to them.*] Now you listen to me. I'm willing to think of you and Effie and Johnnie and the others. I'm willing to go on acting and acting and acting, to serve my sentence, so that you can go on producing and producing and producing. You can do your Shakespeare and you can do your Ibsen provided we can get married. Oh quietly—I'll keep the marriage a secret. Either you do this or I'll give that bunch of reporters a story of our engagement that will spread over the front page of every paper in this town. Now, it's up to you. [*There is a knock at the door. He lowers his voice.*] There they are. Now think and think fast.

ROSENBAUM. [*Whispering.*] What will we do?

MRS. DEAN. [*Whispering.*] What can we do?

JERRY. [*Whispering.*] Come with us.

MRS. DEAN. [*Whispering.*] Where?

JERRY. [*Whispering.*] To the Little Church Around the Corner.

ROSENBAUM. [*Getting* MRS. DEAN'S *coat from the couch, gives it to her, whispering.*] For God's sake go, but go quietly.

JERRY. [*Reaching out his hand to* MRS. DEAN.] Come, mother.

[BETTY, MRS. DEAN *and* JERRY *start to the door at the left, walking on tiptoes.* ROSENBAUM *tiptoes to the other door. The knocking becomes louder. He motions to them to hurry and they go smilingly as he is about to admit the reporters.*

THE END

THE FAMOUS MRS. FAIR

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

JEFFREY FAIR
NANCY FAIR
ALAN FAIR
SYLVIA FAIR
PEGGY GIBBS
ANGELICA BRICE
E. DUDLEY GILLETTE
NORA
MRS. GILBERT WELLS
MRS. LESLIE CONVERSE
MRS. KELLETT BROWN
MRS. NORMAN WYNNE
MRS. STUART PERRIN

The Scenes of the First and Second Acts are laid at the home of JEFFREY FAIR on Long Island, in the months of May and June; the occurrences of the succeeding acts take place in his apartments in a New York hotel during an evening in October.

THE FAMOUS MRS. FAIR

Original cast, as first presented at the Henry Miller Theatre, New York, December 22, 1919

It is arranged in the order in which they first appear.

Sylvia Fair	*Margalo Gillmore*
Alan Fair	*Jack Devereaux*
Nora	*Betty Hall*
E. Dudley Gillette . . .	*Robert Strange*
Angelica Brice	*Virginia Hammond*
Nancy Fair	*BLANCHE BATES*
Jeffrey Fair	*HENRY MILLER*
Mrs. Norman Wynne . .	*Dallas Tyler*
Mrs. Kellett Brown . .	*Marian Lord*
Mrs. Stuart Perrin . . .	*Maude Allan*
Mrs. Leslie Converse . .	*Alice Baxter*
Mrs. Gilbert Wells . .	*Florence Williams*
Peggy Gibbs	*Kathleen Conegys*

THE FAMOUS MRS. FAIR

THE FIRST ACT

The living-room of JEFFREY FAIR'S *home on Long Island. The walls are panelled and painted in soft tones; at the left is a fireplace, at the right a door into a hall and at the back three French windows opening onto a terrace beyond which is a vista of wooded hills. The room is charmingly and luxuriously furnished, everything denoting wealth and refinement. A large table with a lamp, writing materials, photographs, books and bowls of flowers is at the right. Behind it is a chair and in front of it a couch. Between the windows are consoles and, on either side of them, small chairs. In the corner of the room is a lacquer cabinet. There are two large wing chairs, one in front of the fireplace, the other against the left wall below the fireplace. Bowls and vases of flowers are in every available place, giving a festive aspect to the room. Above the centre window is a floral piece fashioned of laurel and red, white and blue flowers, in the centre the words "Welcome Home Our Heroine," at the base red, white and blue ribbons fastened with a cockade and projecting from its upper corners are miniature flags of the United States, Great Britain and France.*

SYLVIA FAIR *is coming from the garden through the sunshine of a May morning. In a simple gingham dress with her hair hanging in a golden cloud about her shoulders, her arms filled with lilacs, she is a radiant picture of sweet, unspoiled girlhood, not at all the usual modern miss of eighteen. She runs up the steps and into the room where she flits about arranging the flowers, humming the air of a gay little song. Her*

task completed, she stands looking at the result with joyful satisfaction when the voice of ALAN FAIR *is heard outside in the hall.*

ALAN. [*Calling.*] Oh, Sylvia!

SYLVIA. Yes, Alan.

[ALAN FAIR, *a fine example of American youth, comes in hurriedly.*

ALAN. Hello, Sis.

SYLVIA. Hello, Alan!

ALAN. Mother not here yet?

SYLVIA. No. But she will be any moment. The boat docked an hour ago.

ALAN. Did you get in touch with Dad?

SYLVIA. Yes. Last night as soon as I received the wireless.

ALAN. Why didn't you meet mother?

SYLVIA. They won't let you on the pier without an alibi or something.

ALAN. Hello! Give me John 6780!

SYLVIA. What are you going to do?

ALAN. 'Phone Peggy. I motored her in this morning. Tire went bad. She was afraid I wouldn't be here in time!

SYLVIA. I wonder why mother didn't cable that she had changed from the French Line to the *Olympic?*

ALAN. Oh, hello! Is this 6780 John? I'd like to speak to Miss Gibbs. [*To* SYLVIA.] Say, but you're going to be a big surprise to mother.

SYLVIA. Yes. Two years makes a lot of difference in a woman.

ALAN. You! You're only a kid.

SYLVIA. Why, I'm eighteen.

ALAN. Oh, hello! Is that you, Peggy? Yes, I got here in time. Boat's docked.

SYLVIA. Give Peggy my love.

ALAN. Sylvia says to give you her love! That goes

double for me. Oh, that's all right. I'm going to tell Sylvia. No, I won't say a word to anyone else. I promise.

[SYLVIA, *astonished, goes to* ALAN *and suddenly reaches over, turns the transmitter towards herself and talks into it.*

SYLVIA. Oh, Peggy, I've been hoping you were going to be my sister-in-law.

ALAN. [*Greatly surprised.*] Why, how did you know?

SYLVIA. [*Taking the telephone from* ALAN.] Peggy, Alan wants to know how I knew. Isn't that funny? When did you say "yes"? Last night? [ALAN *is impatiently trying to take the telephone from* SYLVIA.] I'm so glad. Yes, I'm awfully excited. I can hardly wait until mother gets here.

ALAN. [*Grabbing the telephone.*] Good-bye, darling! Don't get so fresh! What number do I want? You've cut me off.

[ALAN *irritably moves receiver hook up and down.* SYLVIA *laughing, takes the telephone from* ALAN *and puts it on the table.* ALAN *goes sulkily to the armchair.*

ALAN. How did you know I was in love with Peggy?

SYLVIA. [*Coming to him.*] Oh, you weren't running up to Connecticut every other minute since you've been demobilised to see your "buddy," even if he is as nice a one as Tom Gibbs. Why, the very first time I met Peggy, I knew.

ALAN. I didn't know it myself then.

[*He sits.*

SYLVIA. [*Leaning over the back of the chair.*] Are you going to tell mother and daddy?

ALAN. Not right away.

SYLVIA. Afraid they won't like your marrying beneath you?

ALAN. Where do you get that stuff?

SYLVIA. Peggy *is* a stenographer, and you *are* the son of Jeffrey Fair.

ALAN. Yes, and Peggy's been self-supporting and, except what Uncle Sam paid me, *I've* never earned a nickel. Marrying beneath me! I'm marrying above me.

SYLVIA. [*Sitting on the arm of the chair.*] I hope they think so. Of course, mother's been helping for four years to save the world for Democracy. I suppose that's made her democratic, and daddy has no use for his ancestors. Still it's going to be an awful shock to everyone here.

ALAN. I should worry about shocking the neighbours.

SYLVIA. Then why keep it a secret?

ALAN. Peggy thinks it might spoil the family reunion for mother if I—well, spring a new member on her.

SYLVIA. That's very thoughtful, very sweet of Peggy.

ALAN. Everything about her is sweet. I'm crazy about the whole family. They have the homiest kind of a home. You know, at night Mrs. Gibbs sewing and Mr. Gibbs reading his paper and a bowl of apples on the table.

SYLVIA. Of course, an apple at night would give me the pip but it must be lovely.

ALAN. It would be great if you liked Tom.

SYLVIA. Oh, Alan, I don't believe I could marry a policeman.

ALAN. He's not a policeman. He's a detective and the best pal. Sylvia, you're not going to be a rotten snob about a man who fought for you, side by side with your own brother?

SYLVIA. You know I'm not a snob. I love Peggy and I like Tom. But I can't marry all the men who fought for me. I don't want to marry anyway. All I want to do is get acquainted again with my mother.

[NORA, *a housemaid, enters.*

NORA. Mr. Alan, a gentleman to see you.

[ALAN *takes the card, looks at it.*

SYLVIA. Why, Nora, we can't see anyone today.

NORA. That's what I told him. It's something to do with your mother.

SYLVIA. [*Going to* ALAN.] Who is he?

ALAN. [*Reading.*] "E. Dudley Gillette of the Gillette Lecture Bureau."

NORA. He says it's very important.

ALAN. Show him in.

SYLVIA. What can he want?

ALAN. [*Reading.*] "Business Representative for Tommy Perkins, the Flying Ace; Montague Travers, War Correspondent." Seems to specialise in war heroes.

SYLVIA. I'll bet he's selling tickets.

[*She sits in the armchair.*

[NORA *shows in* E. DUDLEY GILLETTE, a man of thirty-*five, of good appearance and address, but not a gentleman. His manner is over-suave, his clothes too correct.*

GILLETTE. Good morning, Captain Fair.

ALAN. No, just plain *Mr.* Fair now.

GILLETTE. [*Bowing to* SYLVIA.] I hope you'll excuse this intrusion, [*to* ALAN] but I have something here for Major Fair that was too important to entrust to a messenger as I want her to receive it immediately on her arrival.

[*He takes from his pocket an envelope and hands it to* ALAN.

ALAN. Won't you sit down?

GILLETTE. Thank you.

ALAN. [*Indicating the envelope.*] Something of a confidential nature?

GILLETTE. Well, no. It's an offer to make a lecture tour of the country under my management.

ALAN. A what? [*He opens the envelope.*

SYLVIA. Mother lecture? Oh, how ghastly!

ALAN. [*Reading the contract.*] This wouldn't interest her.

GILLETTE. Oh, I don't know. My London representative cabled that she would give my offer her consideration.

ALAN. That's my mother's way of being polite.

GILLETTE. Possibly. Still she did go to London to see my man.

ALAN. You knew that mother was arriving on the *Olympic?*

GILLETTE. Yes, that's why I am here. I wanted to be the first on the ground. There will be a keen competition for her among the lecture bureaus.

ALAN. Why?

GILLETTE. The newspapers have been full of the work done overseas by Major Fair and her Unit; her decoration by the French Government, all that with her social position here——

SYLVIA. [*Indignantly.*] Why, I think it's perfectly awful of you or anyone else to think that our mother is going around the country showing off her Croix de Guerre.

ALAN. Mother has no desire to boast of her work. There is not the slightest use leaving this.

[*He replaces the contracts in the envelope which he offers to* GILLETTE, *who rises.*

GILLETTE. Because her family wouldn't permit her to accept it?

ALAN. [*Snubbing him.*] My mother makes her own decisions.

GILLETTE. [*Very suavely.*] Then why can't I leave it for her?

ALAN. [*Coldly.*] No reason.

GILLETTE. Well, then——

[ALAN *looks at* GILLETTE, *then, turning away, places the envelope in the pocket of his coat.* SYLVIA *is looking at* GILLETTE. GILLETTE *looks at her interestedly, in fact rather rudely "sizes her up."* SYLVIA *is puzzled and a little embarrassed, being utterly unaccustomed to that kind of scrutiny.* ALAN *turns.* GILLETTE *quickly assumes a suave smile.*

GILLETTE. Thank you. Good morning.

ALAN. Good morning.

[GILLETTE *goes.* SYLVIA *rises and runs over to* ALAN.

SYLVIA. [*Distressed—almost in tears.*] Oh, Alan, mother

wouldn't do it. Surely, when she's been home only once in four years she won't want to go away again.

ALAN. [*Soothingly.*] Certainly not.

[*He puts his arms around* SYLVIA.

[ANGELICA BRICE, *a pretty blonde widow in the thirties, fragile, appealing, essentially feminine and charmingly gowned, appears at the door to the terrace.*

ANGY. Hello, Sylvia.

ALAN. [*Impatiently.*] Oh——

[*He turns away in disgust.* SYLVIA *runs to* ANGY.

SYLVIA. Oh, Angy, darling. Come in.

ANGY. Oh, no. I simply wanted your mother to have this little welcome from her next-door neighbour.

SYLVIA. That's lovely of you. Come in and tell me if you think the place looks nice.

[*She takes the violets, places them in a bowl on the table.* ANGY *comes into the room. She looks at the decorations.*

ANGY. Oh, it's charming! How do you do, Alan?

ALAN. [*Coldly.*] How do you do, Mrs. Brice.

ANGY. Oh, it's charming.

[*She sits in the arm-chair.*

SYLVIA. [*Running over to her.*] I'm so glad mother came home in May. She loves the Spring flowers.

ANGY. I suppose your father's at the dock.

SYLVIA. I hope so. I had such a time getting him last night at Washington.

ANGY. Oh, darling, I could have told you he'd be here today. I'm so glad for you that your mother's coming home at last.

ALAN. [*Significantly.*] I'm so glad for father's sake.

[*He looks meaningly at* ANGY, *who, although thoroughly understanding the implication in his speech, is apparently oblivious.* SYLVIA *is wholly unaware of* ANGY'S *and* ALAN'S *fencing.*

ANGY. He must have missed her. Hasn't it been awfully sporting of him never to have complained?

SYLVIA. If it hadn't been for you, we'd have died of loneliness. I'll never forget how good you've been to me and daddy.

ALAN. Neither will I. You've tried your darnedest to take mother's place. And even if you haven't succeeded, you've made a corking good stab at it.

ANGY. [*To* ALAN, *very sweetly.*] So glad you appreciate it.

ALAN. Why, no one in this family appreciates you as I do.

SYLVIA. [*Delightedly runs to* ALAN.] I knew you'd like Angy when you understood her.

ALAN. Why, Sylvia, I've always understood Mrs. Brice.

[*He is standing, his arm about* SYLVIA, *smiling at* ANGY, *who is furious with him, although she seems to be unruffled. The voices of* NANCY *and* JEFFREY *are heard in the hall.*

NANCY. [*Outside.*] Oh, children! Where are you?

SYLVIA. Mother!

ALAN. It's mother!

[*They rush into the hall calling excitedly,* "Mother! Mother!" *There is a babel of excited greeting.* ANGY *rises and retires to a position where she can watch unobserved the advent of* NANCY FAIR, *who appears presently, between* SYLVIA *and* ALAN, *her arms about their shoulders. In her Overseas uniform of horizon blue, Sam Browne belt, beret and ribbon of the Croix de Guerre, she is a vividly arresting figure, the personification of those American women brought into prominence during the war because of their executive ability, gay courage and unselfish devotion.*

NANCY *is overjoyed at the meeting with her children. She hugs and kisses* SYLVIA *repeatedly.* ALAN *is trying to attract his mother's attention and finally taps her affectionately on the shoulder.*

ALAN. Mother, I could do with a little of that.

NANCY. Alan! Alan!

[*She turns to him and he takes her in his arms. She kisses him, puts him away from her, looks at him fondly, then embraces him again and again.* SYLVIA *has run across to* JEFFREY FAIR, *who has followed them and is watching, happily, the reunion of his family. He is fifty and represents the highest type of the American man of affairs.*

ANGY, *coming forward, is seen by* JEFFREY. *He is slightly startled and visibly annoyed, but controlling himself he bows, smilingly, then tries to attract* NANCY'S attention.

JEFFREY. Oh, Nancy! [NANCY *does not hear him. He raises his voice.*] Oh, Nancy——! [NANCY *turns to him. He indicates* ANGY.] This is Mrs. Brice.

[ALAN, *annoyed, moves away.* NANCY *turns to* MRS. BRICE, *smiling, and is about to go to her, when* SYLVIA *runs to* ANGY *and, taking her by the hand, brings her to* NANCY.

SYLVIA. Mother, this is Angy!

NANCY. [*Very cordially.*] Oh, you are Sylvia's Angy. The child's letters have been full of you. You've been so kind to my little girl.

ANGY. [*Very sweetly.*] Sylvia and her father have been very kind to me. I hadn't meant to intrude.

SYLVIA. Oh, mother, Angy brought these.

[*She picks up the bowl of violets, shows them to* NANCY, *who exclaims at the sight of them.*

NANCY. Oh, how sweet of you!

ANGY. I must go. Good-bye, Sylvia.

[*She starts toward the door to the terrace.*

NANCY. You'll come again very soon, won't you?

ANGY. Oh, I'll be sure to! [*She smiles very sweetly at* NANCY, *turns, looks at* JEFFREY, *waves her hand airily.*] Bye-bye, Jeffie!

[*She goes.*

[*A slight pause.* NANCY *is surprised, amused,* JEFFREY *annoyed, confused.*

NANCY. [*Imitating* ANGY.] "Jeffie"—— [*Very innocently.*] Darling, have you been carrying on a little bit?

JEFFREY. Certainly not. [NANCY *laughs.* ALAN *is amused.* SYLVIA *oblivious.* JEFFREY, *embarrassed, pretends to search for something on the table.*] Damn it all, you never can find a match in this house!

SYLVIA. Here they are. You never look.

[JEFFREY *goes to* SYLVIA, *who gives him a match.* NANCY *laughs. She looks about her.*

NANCY. Well, Alan, some swell dugout.

SYLVIA. Daddy, listen to mother talking slang.

ALAN. Get our decorations?

NANCY. Bless your hearts! They are lovely!

SYLVIA. *Our* decorations! *I* did it all.

NANCY. Sylvia, that placard's going it a bit strong. Your mother isn't a heroine.

SYLVIA. [*Expostulating.*] Aren't you a Major, and decorated, and everything?

NANCY. [*With mock seriousness.*] 'N everything!

SYLVIA. Mother, when you were given the Croix de Guerre, did the General kiss you on both cheeks?

[JEFFREY *advances towards them.*

NANCY. Ask me some other time, darling; your father is listening.

JEFFREY. If he didn't, he was a poor fish!

[NANCY *blows him a kiss.*

SYLVIA. Poor daddy When I think how you slaved in that old Quartermaster's Department, I don't see why they didn't decorate you.

JEFFREY. They don't pin any medals on you for trying to save the people's money.

NANCY. [*Looking about her.*] Is all this magnificence mine?

JEFFREY. Are you referring to me?

ALAN. No. She means me.

NANCY. I mean Sylvia. Gracious, child, what have you

been taking to make you grow? Jeff, isn't she the prettiest daughter that ever was?

JEFFREY. Look at her father.

NANCY. Oh, you! Alan, you look simply scrumptious!

JEFFREY. [*Sitting in the arm-chair.*] What about me?

NANCY. You! You haven't pined away for me at all. I'm frightfully disappointed.

SYLVIA. Oh, mother! Why?

NANCY. He should be pale and wan, and look at him! He's fat, positively fat!

JEFFREY. [*Indignantly.*] I am not fat.

SYLVIA. He's not.

NANCY. [*Laughing.*] Alan, we'll have to take him in hand. You know [*illustrating*] fifty times before breakfast.

ALAN. [*Laughs.*] Too late.

[*He sits on the couch.*

SYLVIA. You two stop picking on my daddy. I think he's perfectly grand.

NANCY. He has me hypnotised just that same way, darling.

ALAN. Yes. Taken by and large, he's not a bad old scout.

JEFFREY. Here, son, my wife has been mingling with the flower of the youth of both hemispheres, so cut that *old.*

[NANCY *goes to* JEFFREY, *sits on the arm of his chair and hugs him.*

NANCY. None of them so nice as you.

JEFFREY. Sure?

NANCY. Well, pretty sure.

SYLVIA. Oh, mother, you look so young.

NANCY. Nobody ever had a nicer daughter.

ALAN. They've got to go some to tie you, mother—eh, Dad?

JEFFREY. I'll say it.

NANCY. Such compliments from my family! You're not getting me in a good humour so that you can spring something on me?

ALAN. How does it seem to be home, mother?

NANCY. If Sylvia won't be shocked by my language, I'll confess I'm having a pippin of a time!

[JEFFREY *puts his arm around her.*

ALAN. You are going to find it awfully flat.

[NANCY *is smiling. Her expression changes. She looks at* ALAN *curiously.* SYLVIA *turns.* JEFFREY *leans forward in his chair. They also look in surprise at* ALAN.

NANCY. What do you mean?

JEFFREY. [*Indignantly.*] Yes, I'd like to know what he means.

SYLVIA. Alan! The idea! She didn't find it flat when she was here the last time.

ALAN. Mother was busy getting money for her Unit, and she was going back. Take it from me. I've been through it. You're going to miss the something—I don't know what it is—but life over there gets you. You know that, mother. You'll find yourself thinking more about the people you left over there than your old friends here.

[NANCY *rises and moves toward* SYLVIA. *She is thinking. The others watch her closely. Seeing that* SYLVIA *is looking at her anxiously, she smiles and goes to her.*

NANCY. What are you worrying about, dear?

SYLVIA. You won't get bored at home, will you, mother?

JEFFREY. Sylvia, don't pay any attention to this young kill-joy. [*He rises and advances on* ALAN.] What the devil is the matter with you?

[*He glares in indignation at* ALAN, *who rises and goes to the door to the terrace.* SYLVIA, *even with her mother's arms around her, is still unconvinced.*

SYLVIA. But you won't get bored, will you?

NANCY. No. No. No. You silly little goose!

[*She has taken* SYLVIA'S *face in her hands, kissing her after each "No" and at the end of the speech, then, taking her over to the arm-chair, swings her onto the arm of the chair, where* SYLVIA *perches, all*

smiles again, her arm around NANCY, *who is seated.* JEFFREY *is sitting on the couch, looking at them and smiling happily.*

JEFFREY. It's good to see you over there, Nancy. We missed you—eh, Sylvia?

SYLVIA. You missed us, didn't you, mother?

ALAN. When she had the time to think about you. But you never had the time——

JEFFREY. Say, will you let your mother speak for herself?

ALAN. Just the same, I'm right, aren't I, mother?

NANCY. Perhaps—in a way. But I had lots of time to be lonesome for all of you.

[*She looks lovingly at* JEFFREY.

[NORA *comes in, bringing a tray.*

NANCY. Well, if it isn't Nora! I am glad to see you.

[*She rises, greeting* NORA *warmly.*

NORA. It's glad I am to see you, Mrs. Fair, safe and sound out of them trenches!

[NANCY *moves toward the tray and begins to examine its contents.* JEFFREY *and* SYLVIA *join* ALAN. *They stand watching her, much amused.*

NANCY. What's this?

NORA. Luncheon's a couple of hours off and cook thought you might like a snack.

NANCY. Don't tell me it's honest-to-God American boiled coffee? And sugar! And butter! And real cream from a cow! I simply can't bear it!

NORA. It's starved you've been by them Paris chefs!

NANCY. You've said it, Nora. Give cook a kiss. How are all the others?

NORA. Oh, fine, and waiting in the kitchen to welcome you.

NANCY. I'll be there very soon.

NORA. Oh, Mrs. Fair, take no notice of William if he's kinda short with you. He's that annoyed; he didn't know you were coming. He was for having a triumphal arch over the front door.

NANCY. I won't.

[*They laugh.* NORA *goes.* NANCY *sits on the couch.* SYLVIA *brings a chair and sits beside her.*

SYLVIA. Now, mother, tell us everything.

JEFFREY. Oh, let your mother drink her coffee. We've all the rest of our lives to hear about it.

ALAN. Oh, mother, they won't understand. You can't talk about it.

SYLVIA. What?

JEFFREY. [*Guyingly.*] You've done nothing else since you've been home. [*Tenderly.*] But you've always had one proud listener, son.

ALAN. [*Shyly.*] Dad!

NANCY. And here's another! Come over here this instant and kiss your proud mother.

ALAN. Oh, mother!

NANCY. This instant minute.

JEFFREY. Captain Fair, the Major is talking to you.

[ALAN *snaps to a salute.* NANCY *jumps to her feet, returns it. They laugh.* ALAN *kisses* NANCY *and she sits on the couch with* ALAN *and* SYLVIA *beside her.* JEFFREY, *in the arm-chair, looks fondly at the group.*

ALAN. Say, we're going to have some great talks!

NANCY. We're going to fight this old war right from the beginning!

JEFFREY. Sylvia, it's going to be great to hear just what Foch should have done.

SYLVIA. You don't need to think you're going to sneak off by yourselves.

NANCY. You can trail right along, darling. Well, Alan, I suppose you can't wait to get back to Yale.

JEFFREY. He's not going back.

NANCY. What?

ALAN. I'm going in for mining.

NANCY. Going to be a horny-handed son of toil with a little lamp in your hat and everything. Now, I'm only

teasing. Bless your heart, you do what you want to do. You would, anyway. [*To* SYLVIA.] How are Biddy Wynne and all my girls?

SYLVIA. Oh, fine. They're coming over later.

JEFFREY. [*Annoyed.*] Today?

SYLVIA. Yes. I 'phoned them last night. I knew mother's Unit would want to welcome her home.

NANCY. Quite right, dear. I'm crazy to see them.

JEFFREY. [*Grumbling.*] I think people might let us have you to ourselves the first day.

NANCY. [*Changing the subject.*] Now, Sylvia, tell me all the news, and I wouldn't mind a little gossip.

SYLVIA. The Wellington-Smiths have a new baby.

NANCY. So? Who's been divorced?

SYLVIA. Not a soul.

NANCY. What?

ALAN. Yes, this war has done that for the country. Fighting in France has given a lot of husbands a rest from battles at home.

JEFFREY. Old stuff, Alan. Possibly gave the wives a rest, too.

NANCY. Thank you, Jeffrey. Sylvia, no matter how many times you marry, always select a gentleman like your father. Who is this Angy Brice?

ALAN. Oh, mother, just as we were all so happy!

SYLVIA. Why, I wrote to you about her.

NANCY. Yes, darling, I know your Mrs. Brice. [*Meaningly.*] I want to know Jeff's Mrs. Brice.

JEFFREY. [*Irritably.*] She's not my Mrs. Brice.

NANCY. Why, Jeffrey, don't you want to tell me about your little playmate?

JEFFREY. [*Casually.*] Of course. She's a little widow who lives next door. Wasn't she here when you came over last time?

NANCY. No——

SYLVIA. Daddy, don't you remember we met her just after mother sailed?

JEFFREY. [*Indifferently.*] Oh, yes, I believe we did. I'd forgotten. She's a charming woman.

NANCY. Uhmm.

JEFFREY. Took a great shine to Sylvia.

NANCY. Oh, I think she likes you, too.

SYLVIA. She's devoted to us. We've seen her every day. We three had great times. Motor rides, picnics——

NANCY. Just a moment, Sylvia. Did I hear correctly? Your father on a *picnic?*

JEFFREY. Sylvia liked them.

NANCY. Oh, I hope Angy did, too. Alan, don't you like picnics?

SYLVIA. Alan! Oh, he hasn't been here.

NANCY. Where have you been? Now, Alan, 'fess up. Who is she?

[ALAN *is embarrassed, confused.* SYLVIA *enjoys it for a moment, then comes to his rescue.*

SYLVIA. Alan has been visiting his "buddy."

NANCY. Oh!

[ALAN *looks gratefully at* SYLVIA.

SYLVIA. So you see, mother, I had to depend on Angy. I Red Crossed with her in town.

NANCY. Rather a fag, going to New York, wasn't it?

SYLVIA. Oh, daddy drove us in and out. Sometimes we dined on the way home, and when I was too tired I let Daddy and Angy dine together. They didn't mind.

NANCY. [*Quizzically.*] No?

SYLVIA. Wasn't it sweet of them?

NANCY. That was thoughtful. What made you tired, dear?

JEFFREY. [*Irritably.*] Oh, the heat and one thing and another. But let us drop Mrs. Brice.

NANCY. Oh, my dear, I couldn't. What would people say when she has been so kind to you? I am going to be very nice to her.

[NORA *enters.*

NORA. Oh, Mr. Alan, Mr. Gillette has just telephoned.

ALAN. Yes?

NORA. I told him you couldn't be disturbed and he asked me to remind you about the contract he left for Mrs. Fair.

[*She takes the tray and goes.* ALAN *and* SYLVIA *exchange glances.*

NANCY. Contract? What contract?

ALAN. Oh, it's nothing you need bother about now, mother.

SYLVIA. It can wait.

NANCY. [*Rising.*] Children, I am dying of curiosity.

ALAN. Honestly, it's of no importance.

JEFFREY. Your mother is the best judge of that. Give it to her.

ALAN. [*Giving* NANCY *the envelope.*] Oh, all right. [*To* JEFFREY.] It's a contract for a lecture tour.

JEFFREY. A wha—a lecture tour! Oh, this is immense!

[JEFFREY *shrieks with laughter.* NANCY, *who has been reading the contract, goes toward him.*

NANCY. Well, Mr. Jeffrey Fair, there is nothing funny about the money he offers me. Alan, what's a hundred times $300?

ALAN. $30,000.

NANCY. Help!

JEFFREY. Oh, it's a fake.

SYLVIA. [*Rising.*] Mother, you couldn't lecture. You don't know how.

NANCY. Oh, don't I, miss? I gave a little talk one night to the boys on the boat and they assured me that I was a riot.

JEFFREY. What did you talk about?

NANCY. My experiences.

SYLVIA. Did you like doing it?

NANCY. It was rather fun. Of course, if I did it here it wouldn't be for money.

JEFFREY. But, Nancy, you're not going to do it here.

ALAN. That contract calls for a Coast-to-Coast tour.

NANCY. I've never been to California.

JEFFREY. Why, you haven't been home for more than twenty minutes. You're surely not contemplating going away again? [NANCY *is silent.*] Nancy, what are you thinking about?

NANCY. I was just thinking that $30,000 would do a lot of reconstructing——

ALAN. She's back in France. What did I tell you?

JEFFREY. [*Rising.*] This home could do with a little "reconstructing."

NANCY. [*Meaningly.*] Oh, come now, Jeff! After what I've seen and heard today, you can't tell me that you really need anything.

SYLVIA. We need you, mother, awfully.

[*She goes to* NANCY.

NANCY. [*Kissing her.*] Well, my lamb, you are going to have me.

JEFFREY. The question is, for how long?

NANCY. It's a wise wife who keeps her husband guessing. Come along, Sylvia, and watch mother get the glad hand from the help.

[SYLVIA *laughs as they leave the room with their arms about each other.*

ALAN. I could choke Nora. I was going to hide that contract.

JEFFREY. Oh, this Gillette individual would have got to her sooner or later. [*There is a slight pause.*] Alan, I don't want you to misunderstand about Mrs. Brice.

ALAN. I don't on your end of it. But she's after you, Dad.

JEFFREY. Maybe. But that'll be finished. As a matter of fact, I didn't mean to go it so strong. Lonely.

ALAN. Oh, Hell! I know, I know.

JEFFREY. Do you think there's been any talk?

ALAN. You can bet your life not where I could hear it.

JEFFREY. Alan, you're a great old son.

ALAN. You're some dad! [*A pause.*] Say, dad, do you mind if I say something to you?

JEFFREY. If you have some advice up your sleeve, shake it out.

ALAN. Kind of fresh, me advising you.

JEFFREY. You've seen things. You're not a kid any longer. You fought for me. It seems to me that gives you the right to speak your mind.

ALAN. You know, mother is the greatest——

[JEFFREY *has started to say "greatest ever" also. He stops.*

JEFFREY. If you are going to do this as a duet, let's get together.

ALAN and JEFFREY. Mother is the greatest ever.

JEFFREY. That's unanimous. Now, fire away!

ALAN. Mother made a whale of a hit in France.

JEFFREY. Yes, I know. If she wanted to she could call Pershing "Jack," and Haig "Doug."

ALAN. Not forgetting "Ferdie" Foch. [*They laugh.* Over here, they are going to be there strong with the palaver.

JEFFREY. Yes, I expect that.

ALAN. Mother's going to fall for it.

JEFFREY. Yes, I've discounted that, too.

ALAN. Have you discounted the effect on her when it's all over?

JEFFREY. I hadn't gotten as far as that.

ALAN. Take a running jump and arrive there.

JEFFREY. Humm.

ALAN. You've got to heel yourself for the day when mother takes a look around and says: "France never was like this."

JEFFREY. *Humm.*

ALAN. And when that cold grey morning arrives, don't be too busy to make life very damned interesting for mother.

JEFFREY. That's a pretty tall order for a man without any gold lace on his chest, but I'll do my damnedest.

ALAN. And if I see the symptoms coming, having been through it myself, I'll give you the high sign.

JEFFREY. Do. Have a cigarette?

ALAN. Thanks.

[*They go out to the terrace, stopping to light their cigarettes, they go down the steps into the garden.* NORA *appears, showing in* MRS. WYNNE.

NORA. I'll tell Mrs. Fair you're here.

MRS. WYNNE. Thank you, Nora.

[NORA *goes.*

[*From the hall, arm in arm like three musketeers, come* MRS. BROWN, MRS. PERRIN *and* MRS. CONVERSE. *These women, including* MRS. WYNNE, *are members of the Unit which has served with* NANCY *in France. They are of contrasting types; all of them in their thirties; they wear uniforms similar to that of* NANCY. MRS. BROWN, MRS. PERRIN *and* MRS. CONVERSE *are gay, excited;* MRS. WYNNE *is rather tearful.*

MRS. BROWN. I'm so excited. I can hardly wait to see Nancy.

MRS. PERRIN. Soft pedal on that, Lila, when your hubby's around.

[*She sits on the couch.*

MRS. BROWN. Look at Biddy! Biddy, you poor old fish, wake up; your buddy's home.

MRS. WYNNE. [*Tearfully.*] I can't seem to realise it.

MRS. CONVERSE. Cut out the sob stuff, darling.

[*She sits beside* MRS. PERRIN. *Their laughter is interrupted by the appearance of the remaining member of the Unit,* MRS. WELLS, *a woman of dominating personality, about fifty years of age; she also is in uniform, and carries a large and very elaborate bouquet.*

MRS. BROWN. Get Wellsie!

MRS. WELLS. Now, girls, after the salute—and for goodness' sake get some snap in it—you advance, Bridget, and present the bouquet to Major Fair.

MRS. WYNNE. [*Protesting.*] Why is this presentation stuff wished on me?

MRS. WELLS. Weren't you Nancy's buddy?

MRS. WYNNE. [*Sarcastically.*] I never handed her any bouquets.

MRS. BROWN. Now's your chance.

[*She sits on the arm-chair.*

MRS. WYNNE. [*Scornfully.*] It seems such a damn silly thing to do.

MRS. CONVERSE. It is kind of sissy.

MRS. WELLS. [*Indignantly.*] I think it's a sweet idea.

MRS. WYNNE. How in blazes can I salute and hand her a bouquet at the same time?

[*She salutes with her right hand, presenting the bouquet with her left. It is obviously awkward.*

MRS. PERRIN. I have an idea.

MRS. CONVERSE. [*Guyingly.*] No!

MRS. WELLS. Impossible!

MRS. WYNNE. Really!

MRS. PERRIN. [*Going to* MRS. BROWN.] Why couldn't you hold it at your side like a sword and draw it—see?

MRS. WYNNE. [*Disgusted.*] Oh! You poor simp!

MRS. CONVERSE. Oh, Lila, awful!

MRS. BROWN. Terrible!

MRS. PERRIN. Oh, if any of you had thought of it!

MRS. WELLS. [*Witheringly.*] Throw the old thing out the window. I don't care.

[*She sits beside* MRS. CONVERSE *on the couch.*

MRS. WYNNE. I was the goat of this Unit for four years.

MRS. BROWN. [*Teasingly.*] Well, won't you be our little nanny for one more day?

MRS. CONVERSE. [*Innocently.*] What are you going to say, darling, when you give it to her?

MRS. WELLS. [*Casually.*] A few graceful words of welcome.

MRS. WYNNE. [*Furiously.*] I haven't got to make a speech?

MRS. PERRIN. Why, sweetie, you can't just shove it at her.

MRS. WYNNE. Here, Wellsie, take your pretty posies. I'm going home.

[*She throws the bouquet on the couch where* MRS. WELLS *is seated, then starts to go.* MRS. PERRIN *stops her, bringing her over to* MRS. BROWN. *They expostulate with her.*

MRS. PERRIN. Why, Bridget! Nancy would be sick if you weren't here.

MRS. WYNNE. No, I've stood enough. No, I tell you it's "finis."

MRS. WELLS. I seem to be the one at fault. I'll go.

[*She starts to the door.* MRS. CONVERSE *stops her.*

MRS. CONVERSE. Oh, Wellsie, what's the matter with you? Behave! It's like old times, hearing you two scrap.

NANCY. [*Outside.*] Hurry up, Sylvia.

MRS. BROWN. [*Joyously.*] She's coming!

MRS. WELLS. [*In great excitement.*] Fall in, Wynne here. Then Brown. Converse next. [*She turns in irritation to* MRS. CONVERSE, *who has started to the door.*] Converse! [MRS. CONVERSE *runs to* MRS. WELLS, *who grabs her and places her next to* MRS. BROWN.] Perrin! [*She shoves* MRS. PERRIN *into place next to* MRS. CONVERSE, *then takes her own position at the end of the line. The women "dress" to a perfect formation.*] Attention!

[NANCY *rushes in, followed by* SYLVIA.

NANCY. Oh, girls!

MRS. WELLS. Salute!

[*All the women snap to a salute, which is returned by* NANCY. MRS. WYNNE *takes two paces forward in military manner and salutes again.* NANCY *returns it.*

MRS. WYNNE. Major Fair, in the name of your Unit, I wish to extend—— Oh, Buddy! Buddy!

[*She breaks down and, rushing to* NANCY, *throws her arms about her. They embrace wildly.*

NANCY. Biddy! Biddy! My dear old Biddy! Oh,

Billy Brown! And Mary Anne! Oh, Lila! and Wellsie, old girl! Oh, this is wonderful!

[*She embraces them all in turn. They are laughing, crying, in hysterical joy over their reunion.* SYLVIA, *who has been watching them, is much affected.*

MRS. PERRIN. [*Tearfully.*] Hello, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. [*Tearfully.*] Hello.

MRS. CONVERSE. [*Tearfully.*] Oh, Sylvia! Isn't it wonderful, having mother home?

SYLVIA. [*Crying.*] Wonderful.

MRS. WYNNE. [*Suddenly seeing the bouquet on the couch.*] Oh, damn it all, I forgot the bouquet!

[*She picks up the bouquet and gives it to* NANCY, *who laughs.*

MRS. BROWN. Everybody cried all they're going to?

MRS. CONVERSE. Well, Nancy, spill us the news.

NANCY. What do you want to know?

MRS. PERRIN. How's Clementine?

NANCY. Splendid. Sent all of you her dearest love.

MRS. CONVERSE. Was there ever a cook like Clementine!

MRS. PERRIN. Never.

NANCY. You know that tin Lizzie she used to drive? "Ma chere Lizette." I gave her "Lizette" and four new tires. I marked it on my report "abandoned."

MRS. WELLS. What will she do with it?

NANCY. I suppose she'll move the pig out of the parlor. Oh, God love her, how I hated to say good-bye! I hope the people at the Gare du Nord wore rubbers. We wept buckets!

[*The women are seated, clustered about* NANCY. SYLVIA *stands beside her.*

MRS. CONVERSE. My, doesn't it bring it all back!

MRS. WELLS. Yes, if somebody would only drop a bomb I'd feel perfectly at home.

MRS. BROWN. Speaking of bombs—remember Coucy?

MRS. PERRIN. Oh, Billy, don't.

MRS. WYNNE. [*To* NANCY.] Buddy, I'll always remem-

ber you driving that first ambulance down the road with those Jerrys overhead, shooting at you.

SYLVIA. Oh, mother, how could you?

NANCY. Thank heaven, the Boche who followed me couldn't hit anything smaller than the Hippodrome.

MRS. BROWN. That's why they decorated your mother—for that and a few such trifles.

SYLVIA. Did they only give her one measly little Croix de Guerre for that? Why, they ought to have hung medals all over her!

NANCY. Oh, girls, I have a lovely letter from Poincaré and a screed from Pétain, thanking us for our four years' work with the French Army.

MRS. CONVERSE. Some Unit!

MRS. PERRIN. I'll say it was.

MRS. BROWN. Not so worse.

MRS. WELLS. We'll frame those letters and hang them in the club.

MRS. BROWN. Yes. In the smoking-room, where all the women will be sure to see it.

NANCY. [*Giving* SYLVIA *the bouquet.*] Oh, Sylvia, will you put these in my room? Then look in my despatch box. Here are the keys. Bring those kodaks. I had them finished at last.

[*She gives the keys to* SYLVIA, *who runs out.*

NANCY. Now, girls, tell me and tell me true: How does it feel to be at home? [*There is silence.*] Don't everybody shriek with joy at once!

MRS. WYNNE. Seems to me I've been home a million years.

MRS. PERRIN. After a couple of days with my kiddies, I sighed for the peace and quiet of an air raid.

MRS. BROWN. You're in luck to have them. I've been driven to card-indexing my hens!

MRS. CONVERSE. I wish you'd come over and card-index my Swede!

MRS. WELLS. I must confess that after I had kissed my

old man and all the grandchildren, they looked sort of strange to me.

NANCY. Girls, this sounds awful! Possibly Alan was right. He said I would find it flat.

MRS. WYNNE. After being on the hop, skip and jump for four years, it's the very devil to sit around "Bla."

MRS. PERRIN. Have you any plans?

NANCY. I had thought of buying all the clothes in New York, seeing all the shows, playing around with my family . . .

MRS. CONVERSE. We've done all that. And then what?

NANCY. Why, eh——

MRS. PERRIN. Exactly. "Why, eh——"

MRS. BROWN. You see, Nancy, now we have time to burn and no matches.

NANCY. What are all the other war workers doing?

MRS. BROWN. Kicking about being demobilised.

NANCY. It's a burning shame that Washington couldn't have used all this organised talent.

MRS. WELLS. Oh, what could you expect from Congress?

SYLVIA. [*Entering.*] Here are the photographs! Oh, mother, there are a lot of reporters here to see you.

NANCY. Where?

SYLVIA. On the front door step.

NANCY. [*Rises quickly.*] Goodness, child! Run and ask your father for some of his best cigars.

[SYLVIA *runs into the garden, calling "Daddy." The women have risen excitedly at the news of the reporters' arrival. They are congregated about the table, examining the photographs, selecting those they think most suitable for publication.* NANCY *is adjusting her uniform.*

NANCY. My hair's a sight.

MRS. WELLS. You look lovely.

MRS. WYNNE. I'd give them these, Nancy; they're bully of you.

NANCY. I don't think I want any photographs. Jeff mightn't like it.

MRS. CONVERSE. If you don't, they are sure to dig up some horror.

NANCY. Well, give me some of the bunch.

MRS. BROWN. Nancy, where's your Croix de Who's Whoser?

NANCY. Would you wear it?

MRS. PERRIN. Certainly.

[NANCY *is pinning on the Croix de Guerre as* SYLVIA, JEFFREY *and* ALAN *appear from the terrace.*

JEFFREY. Hello.

ALL. Hello, Jeff.

JEFFREY. Which one of you girls wants a cigar?

NANCY. They're for the reporters.

JEFFREY. What reporters?

NANCY. From New York. Come on, girls.

JEFFREY. You're not going to see them?

ALAN. [*Whispering.*] Careful, Dad.

NANCY. Not if you don't wish it.

JEFFREY. Well, all right.

MRS. WELLS. Hurry up, dear, before he changes his mind.

[*The women surround* NANCY *and leave the room,* SYLVIA *in the lead. They are laughing and talking.* JEFFREY *stands watching them, bewildered.*

JEFFREY. My wife! Can you beat it?

ALAN. That's not your wife, Dad; that's Major Fair.

CURTAIN

THE SECOND ACT

The scene is the same as that of the previous act. It is an afternoon in June.

MRS. BROWN, MRS. WELLS, MRS. CONVERSE, MRS. WYNNE *and* MRS. PERRIN and GILLETTE *are seated, all of them engrossed in the afternoon editions of the New York newspapers. The women, in contrast to the uniforms of the first act, are now wearing very charming afternoon gowns.*

MRS. WELLS. This reporter knows what he's talking about.

MRS. CONVERSE. Nancy's lecture sure made a hit last night.

MRS. BROWN. A hit! Listen to this: [*Reading.*] "Another Platform Star. Major Fair Wins an Ovation. Thrills Her Audience."

GILLETTE. I should say she did. I've managed a great many lecturers, but I have never seen so successful a first appearance.

MRS. WYNNE. Did you hear what Angy Brice said last night?

MRS. CONVERSE. No.

MRS. WYNNE. [*Imitating* ANGY'S *manner.*] Nancy's account of our work overseas made her quite envious that she had never been one of the Thank-God-For-The-War-Women.

MRS. CONVERSE. Kitty, kitty, kitty.

MRS. BROWN. Meow! Meow!

MRS. PERRIN. Oh, Mr. Gillette, is Mrs. Fair going to sign that contract with you?

GILLETTE. I hope so. You all might help me to persuade her.

MRS. WELLS. When do you want her to go?

GILLETTE. In July.

MRS. BROWN. Isn't that too early?

GILLETTE. The coast is full of tourists then; besides, I want her to go out and get the money before the people forget that there has been a war.

MRS. WYNNE. But she's only been home a month.

MRS. PERRIN. A month! Isn't that punishment enough?

[*From the hall come* NANCY *and* SYLVIA, *both of them in pretty summer frocks.* NANCY *has in her hand the contract offered her by* GILLETTE *and has evidently been considering it.*

NANCY. Hello, girls.

EVERYBODY. Hello, Nancy; hello, Sylvia.

NANCY. Mr. Gillette, there's a photographer outside who wants to see me.

GILLETTE. It's the man to take the photographs for that Syndicate story.

NANCY. Which one?

GILLETTE. "A Day in the Life of Major Fair." It's to show your domestic side.

NANCY. Oh, I don't know. Girls, don't you think it's rather intimate?

MRS. PERRIN. Not at all.

MRS. CONVERSE. Go on, Nancy; be a sport.

SYLVIA. [*Going to him.*] Mr. Gillette, what photographs are you going to take?

GILLETTE. Major Fair with her morning's mail.

NANCY. Can't you use that one at my desk that was published?

GILLETTE. That'll be fine. Then one in the garden.

NANCY. [*Satirically.*] Another on my knees to the cook.

GILLETTE. [*Enthusiastically.*] One in the kitchen would be great stuff.

SYLVIA. I had better go out and break it to Hulda.

NANCY. She'll say, "Ay ban goin' quit."

MRS. CONVERSE. Put her in the photograph and she'll stay for life.

NANCY. I hope so. She's the seventh in four weeks.

GILLETTE. We'll have the first picture in the garden. I'll go and arrange it. Come on, Sylvia.

NANCY. Don't put me among the lilies. They toil not, neither do they spin.

[GILLETTE *laughs and exits with* SYLVIA *to the garden.* MRS. WELLS *rises and goes to* NANCY, *who has joined* MRS. CONVERSE.

MRS. WELLS. Now, Nancy, you're not going to refuse this great opportunity Mr. Gillette's offering you? Think what we could do with the money.

NANCY. Reconstruction work in France?

MRS. WELLS. No. We could reconstruct some slums in this country.

MRS. WYNNE. Great idea, Wellsie!

MRS. CONVERSE. Splendid scheme!

MRS. PERRIN. It's what we ought to do.

MRS. BROWN. And right now.

MRS. WELLS. We could keep the unit together.

MRS. BROWN. [*Rising.*] I'm for that.

MRS. PERRIN. [*Rising.*] I'm for anything that would give us all something real to do.

MRS. WYNNE. You've said it.

NANCY. I can't make up my mind. I don't believe Jeff would approve and unless he did I wouldn't want to go.

MRS. WELLS. Wasn't he very proud of your success last night?

NANCY. If he was, he has concealed it most carefully.

MRS. BROWN. Hasn't he congratulated you?

NANCY. Not a congrat. "Kinda" took the joy out of it.

MRS. CONVERSE. Don't let that worry you, Nancy. A husband hates to admit that his wife can do anything.

MRS. WELLS. He's likely making himself a bore at the club right now, bragging about you.

NANCY. Do you think so? But if I went, what about Sylvia?

MRS. WYNNE. Why not take her with you?

NANCY. I don't believe she'd want to leave her father. And I don't know that I'd be happy thinking of Jeff here alone again.

MRS. PERRIN. Alan would be here.

NANCY. I hadn't thought of that. Well, I'll think it over.

MRS. WELLS. Think it over seriously.

[SYLVIA *appears at the door to the terrace.*

SYLVIA. Oh, mother, Mr. Gillette's ready.

NANCY. All right. Come on, girls. How do I look?

MRS. BROWN. Fine.

MRS. WELLS. Nancy, I ought to go to market and get Gilbert's fruit for breakfast. It's Saturday and all the melons may be sold.

NANCY. Oh, Wellsie, you should worry. Give him prunes.

[*The women laugh.* NANCY *takes* MRS. WELLS *by the arm and leads her up to door,* MRS. WELLS *expostulating. They all go down the steps to the garden, talking.* NANCY *has given* SYLVIA *the contract.* SYLVIA *places it on the table and is about to follow the women when* ALAN *appears from the hall. He is in golf clothes.*

ALAN. Oh, sis.

SYLVIA. What?

ALAN. Did you fix it with Peggy?

SYLVIA. Yes. She's coming to tea.

ALAN. That's great.

SYLVIA. Are you going to tell mother and daddy this afternoon?

ALAN. Sure.

SYLVIA. Before Peggy arrives?

ALAN. No.

SYLVIA. You should.

ALAN. Not at all. If I tell them I'm going to marry a

stenographer they might be prejudiced. Once they see her they won't care what she is.

SYLVIA. I hope so.

ALAN. Oh, she'll bowl them right over as she did me.

SYLVIA. Where's Daddy?

JEFFREY. [*Entering.*] Right here.

SYLVIA. How was your game?

JEFFREY. Rotten! Why didn't you and your mother join us at luncheon?

SYLVIA. Mr. Gillette came and we couldn't.

ALAN. [*Sitting.*] Is that pest here?

SYLVIA. [*Indignantly.*] Dudley's not a pest. [*Smiling.*] He's charming.

ALAN. Since when, "Dudley"?

SYLVIA. I can't go on calling a man I've seen almost every day for a month Mr. Gillette. Can I, Daddy?

ALAN. [*Coming over to her.*] Don't let me catch you flirting with him.

SYLVIA. Why, Alan Fair, I don't know how.

JEFFREY. Alan, don't talk such damn nonsense.

SYLVIA. Thanks, Daddy.

[ALAN *returns to the arm-chair.*

JEFFREY. Where's your mother?

SYLVIA. In the garden, being photographed.

JEFFREY. *Again?*

ALAN. What's the idea this time?

SYLVIA. It's for a magazine article showing her domestic side.

JEFFREY. I hope the camera can find it.

[*As he passes the table he sees the contract lying on it. He picks it up, sits, and begins to read it.* SYLVIA *goes over to* ALAN, *who is seated.*

SYLVIA. Oh! Have you seen the afternoon papers?

JEFFREY. We have.

SYLVIA. Aren't they wonderful? [ALAN *is silent.* SYLVIA *goes to* JEFFREY.] Aren't they wonderful? [JEFFREY *does not answer.*] Oh, I think that you are both as mean as you

can be about mother! I should think you'd be proud of her!

JEFFREY. We were.

SYLVIA. Why aren't you now? Everybody was crazy about her last night and neither of you so much as congratulated her.

ALAN. I couldn't get near her.

SYLVIA. You didn't try very hard. And, daddy, you left us flat and went home with Angy Brice.

JEFFREY. Angy was feeling seedy.

SYLVIA. Humph! Maybe. Sometimes I think Angy doesn't like mother.

ALAN. Just finding that out?

JEFFREY. Nonsense, children; she admires her enormously.

SYLVIA. You might have waited and said something nice to mother this morning.

ALAN. We had a foursome on and she wasn't up.

JEFFREY. Oh, enough people will make a fuss over her.

SYLVIA. I don't see why you two hate the "fuss" everyone makes over mother. She can't help being celebrated and having people chase after her. You see just as much of her as I do. I don't mind, but you and Alan act so funny. [*Tearfully.*] Nothing's the same as I thought it would be when mother came home. I don't know what's the matter.

JEFFREY. [*Going to* SYLVIA.] Why, Sylvia, Alan and I wouldn't do anything to worry you for the world, would we?

ALAN. Certainly not.

SYLVIA. [*Tearfully.*] Then why aren't you both nicer to mother?

JEFFREY. [*Taking her in his arms.*] Oh, come now; don't cry. Don't you know that your old daddy wouldn't hurt you? Pick out your spot and I'll lie down and let you walk on me. [SYLVIA *smiles.*] That's better.

[*He kisses her, then* SYLVIA *takes his hands and tries to pull him towards the door to the terrace.*

SYLVIA. Don't you want to come out and get in the muss?

JEFFREY. Who's out there?

SYLVIA. Bridget Wynne and the others.

JEFFREY. [*Dropping* SYLVIA's *hands.*] No. I saw all of them yesterday.

SYLVIA. Now, Daddy, you're not going to be nasty about these photographs?

JEFFREY. Not a yap out of me.

[*He laughs.* SYLVIA *kisses him, then runs down the steps, calling "Oh, mother!"* NANCY *and the women who are at the right of the garden call to her.* JEFFREY *follows* SYLVIA *to the door, where he stands looking off into the garden, from which come the sounds of laughter and conversation.*

JEFFREY. Gosh, I'd like to come into this place just once and not find that bunch of women here. A man would have more privacy in the Grand Central Depot.

ALAN. You said it. Whenever mother *is* at home this house looks like a Club women's Old Home Week.

JEFFREY. Wouldn't you think, after four years together, they'd be tired of each other?

[ALAN *joins* JEFFREY *at the door.*

ALAN. And the line of flattery they hand out and mother lapping it up like a cat does cream!

JEFFREY. I know. Even a woman as level-headed as your mother will soon believe she's the greatest thing in the world.

[*He goes to the arm-chair and sits.*

ALAN. Why don't you take her away, out of it all?

JEFFREY. She's booked up a month ahead. Banquets, receptions, although I thought she had been given one by everybody from the Mayor down to the Conductorettes' Union.

ALAN. And they have almost worn out that Croix de Guerre passing it around from hand to hand.

JEFFREY. Yes, and what are you going to do about it?

ALAN. Why did you let her start?

JEFFREY. Who told me to keep her busy?

ALAN. I did—I did. I wasn't counting on the endurance of women. If I had hit a gait like mother's——

JEFFREY. She hasn't rested a day since she arrived.

ALAN. It's a wonder to me that she hasn't had a nervous breakdown.

JEFFREY. Son, the only thing that makes a woman have a nervous breakdown nowadays is having to stay at home. [*A noise of laughter and high-pitched gabble comes from the garden.*] Listen to that cackle. What are they doing?

ALAN. They're leaving.

JEFFREY. All of them?

ALAN. No. Mrs. Wynne, the bodyguard, is sticking around.

JEFFREY. What's Sylvia doing?

ALAN. Standing there, adoring mother as usual.

JEFFREY. She is the sweetest kid.

ALAN. [*Coming to* JEFFREY.] She is that. Doesn't even see that mother is neglecting her. Why can't she settle down and devote herself to Sylvia?

JEFFREY. She would if it weren't for those women and that damn Gillette! He'll have her signed, sealed and delivered.

ALAN. Why don't you tie a can to him?

JEFFREY. How? By forbidding him to come here? My boy, I haven't lived with your mother all these years without realising that, if you want her to do something, tell her she can't.

ALAN. I'm "kinda" that way.

JEFFREY. Yes. It works with you, too.

[*They laugh.* JEFFREY, *rising, sees* ANGY, *who has come from the left side of the garden, and is now at the top of the steps.*

JEFFREY. Hello, Angy!

ANGY. May I come in?

JEFFREY. Certainly.

ANGY. Sure I'm not intruding?

ALAN. [*Sarcastically.*] Oh, not at all. Won't you sit down?

ANGY. Oh, I simply wanted to see Jeff a minute——

ALAN. Might as well be comfortable while you're looking at him.

[*With elaborate politeness, he indicates the arm-chair.* ANGY *looks at him sharply.* ALAN *smiles sweetly.* ANGY *controls her annoyance, smiles at him and sits.* JEFFREY, *oblivious, sits on the couch on the opposite side of the room.* ALAN *wanders over back of* ANGY'S *chair, and takes up his position in the centre of the room between* ANGY *and* JEFFREY.

JEFFREY. All right again?

ANGY. Oh, yes. It was very close in the clubroom last night. Then I got quite worked up over Mrs. Fair's lecture. It was so harrowing.

ALAN. [*Very pleasantly.*] Quite a success, though.

ANGY. [*Smiling sweetly at him.*] Yes, being a woman in uniform helped a lot, don't you think? I'm sure she'll be a great success on tour. She's been so well advertised. You can't pick up a magazine without seeing your mother's picture under "In the Public Eye."

JEFFREY. [*Annoyed.*] She's not on tour yet.

ANGY. [*Innocently.*] She's going, isn't she?

ALAN. It isn't decided.

ANGY. [*Affecting great surprise.*] Why, Mr. Gillette told me the other day that it was practically settled. He was afraid that the family might interfere. I laughed at the idea. Why should you object to Mrs. Fair going away for a few months when she had left you all alone so long?

ALAN. That was kind of you to reassure him.

ANGY. Of course you could go too, Jeff.

JEFFREY. I?

ANGY. [*Sympathetically.*] I suppose it would get tiresome, being merely the husband of Major Fair.

JEFFREY. Yes, one can get fed up on it.

ANGY. I'd be perfectly willing to take charge of Sylvia again.

ALAN. Mother hasn't gone yet.

ANGY. [*Protesting.*] If she wants to, I think she should. It isn't as though Mrs. Fair were a home body like me, just content to make a man comfortable and happy. You can't expect anyone so brilliant as your mother not to get bored with her home and her family. Not that I'm insinuating that she is.

ALAN. Oh, no.

JEFFREY. [*Tired of the discussion.*] What did you want to see me about, Angy?

ANGY. This letter, but there's no hurry. [*There is a pause;* ANGY *looks at* ALAN *and turns away, annoyed.* ALAN *smiles. Finally* ANGY, *determined to be rid of him, turns and smiles sweetly.*] Oh, Alan, been to see your "buddy" lately?

ALAN. [*Confused.*] Why, yes.

ANGY. He must be awfully attractive to have you so devoted to him. [*Meaningly.*] Sylvia says he has a very charming sister.

ALAN. [*More confused.*] Yes—yes, he has.

JEFFREY. [*Rising.*] What's this I hear?

ALAN. [*Very much embarrassed.*] I think I'll go change.

[*He hurriedly leaves the room.* JEFFREY *watching amused.* ANGY *smiles to herself, pleased at having rid herself of* ALAN. JEFFREY *goes to* ANGY.

JEFFREY. Well, Angy, let me see the letter.

ANGY. The letter was only an excuse. I saw those stupid women in the garden and I knew how it bored you to have them around, so I came over to give you an excuse to get away.

JEFFREY. Good of you, Angy, but I'll stay here. They have to go home some time, if it's only to sleep.

[*He goes to a chair below the fireplace, where he sits facing* ANGY, *who looks annoyed at the failure*

of her ruse; as JEFFREY *turns to her she smiles sweetly.*

ANGY. [*Sighing.*] I'd like to be celebrated and have women like me.

JEFFREY. They do.

ANGY. They don't. All their nasty husbands do.

JEFFREY. Why aren't you as nice to the wives?

ANGY. I don't get a chance. The husbands always grab me and rush me off to a corner. The next man I marry has to build me a house that's perfectly round. I'm sick of corners. [JEFFREY *laughs.*] And I'm sick of other women's husbands, too.

JEFFREY. Including me?

ANGY. I haven't had enough of your society since your wife came home to get tired of you, and as I'm not going to have any of it today, I may as well go home.

[*She rises and starts toward the terrace.* JEFFREY *follows her.*

JEFFREY. Oh, wait, Angy, I——

[*He stops, arrested by the appearance of* NANCY *and* MRS. WYNNE *entering from the terrace.* NANCY *is surprised at the sight of* ANGY, *then comes toward her.* NANCY'S *manner is polite but not cordial.*

NANCY. How do you do, Mrs. Brice? Oh, Jeff! I was so sorry we couldn't come to the club.

JEFFREY. [*Coldly.*] That's all right. Sylvia explained.

ANGY. Oh, Mrs. Fair, I don't know what you must have thought of me running away with Jeff last night.

NANCY. Didn't even know you did!

ANGY. I wanted to stay and tell you how splendid you were, but I was rather upset.

MRS. WYNNE. [*Smiling.*] Yes. Don't you hate to hang around where another woman is making the hit?

NANCY. That doesn't often happen where Mrs. Brice is. Does it, Jeff?

ANGY. Oh, really.

NANCY. You will have to excuse me. I have to put on my hat and powder my nose. Come along, Biddy.

JEFFREY. Are you going out again, Nancy?

NANCY. Yes, dear, going over to the Club.

ANGY. Oh, then may I borrow your nice husband to help me with some stupid business things?

NANCY. If you'll be sure to return him.

ANGY. I always have, haven't I? See you later, Jeff.

JEFFREY. If I can manage it.

ANGY. Good-bye, Mrs. Wynne; give my love to dear old Wynne. Good-bye, Mrs. Fair. Hope the photographs are a success. I wish somebody wanted to take mine. It must be lovely to be notorious.

[*She smiles very sweetly, then goes down the steps through the garden to the left.*

NANCY. Sweet woman!

MRS. WYNNE. She's some fast worker with the harpoon. Bye-bye, Jeff.

[*She goes.* NANCY *is following her, but at the door to the hall she stops, looks at* JEFFREY, *who is standing at the fireplace, then advances toward him.*

NANCY. Jeff, dear, why don't you come with us?

JEFFREY. What are you going to do?

NANCY. Mr. Gillette wants a photograph of me with my girls on the steps of the club-house.

JEFFREY. Absurd idea!

NANCY. Why, what's absurd about it? You and Alan were photographed in the Father and Son Tournament.

JEFFREY. That's different. I'm guyed enough by the crowd as it is. I can't pick up a magazine at the club without someone asking me if I'm looking for the Major's picture. [*He comes to her angrily.*] I can't come into this house without falling over a camera, or finding some interviewer smoking my best cigars.

NANCY. [*Taken aback.*] I'm sorry. I don't know quite how I would explain to Mr. Gillette and the girls that you object——

JEFFREY. Don't let me embarrass you. If you want to go on making yourself and your family ridiculous, don't let me stop you.

[*He starts toward the door to the terrace.* NANCY *is indignant, then controls herself.*

NANCY. [*Expostulating.*] Jeff!

JEFFREY. [*Turning.*] Yes?

NANCY. I didn't think——

JEFFREY. No. You never think about anybody but yourself.

[NANCY *stands, annoyed, hurt, speechless.* GILLETTE *enters hurriedly from the terrace.*

GILLETTE. Oh, Mrs. Fair—— [*Sees* JEFFREY.] I beg your pardon.

JEFFREY. Oh, that's all right.

[*He goes, meeting* SYLVIA *at the foot of the steps to the garden. They talk.* GILLETTE *watches* NANCY *narrowly. There is a slight pause, then* NANCY *turns to go.*

GILLETTE. Mrs. Fair, are you going to sign that contract today?

NANCY. I haven't decided. I'll let you know before the day is out. I'll be right down.

[*She goes,* GILLETTE *looking after her annoyed.* JEFFREY *leaves* SYLVIA *and goes through the garden in the direction taken by* ANGY. SYLVIA *runs up steps and comes into the room.* GILLETTE *turns to her.*

GILLETTE. Aren't you coming with us?

SYLVIA. No. Miss Gibbs is coming to tea.

GILLETTE. Who's she?

SYLVIA. Alan's buddy's sister.

GILLETTE. [*Thoughtfully.*] Gibbs? What's her brother's name?

SYLVIA. Tom Gibbs.

GILLETTE. [*Quickly.*] Tom Gibbs? What does he do?

SYLVIA. Arrests people.

GILLETTE. [*Startled.*] What?

SYLVIA. He's a detective. Same thing as a policeman, only he doesn't wear a uniform or stand on the corner.

GILLETTE. I know what a detective is! Are these Gibbs friends of yours?

SYLVIA. Oh, yes.

GILLETTE. That's queer. They don't belong in your set.

SYLVIA. Oh, Dudley, you mustn't be a snob. It isn't being done since the war.

GILLETTE. What does Miss Gibbs do now?

SYLVIA. She is a stenographer. Why are you so interested in her?

GILLETTE. Interested in her! With you here!

[*He goes over to* SYLVIA, *who is seated in the arm-chair. His manner becomes subtly, almost impudently, familiar. He flatters* SYLVIA *in order to extract information from her.*

SYLVIA. You're not interested in me.

GILLETTE. I wouldn't dare tell you how much.

SYLVIA. Why not?

GILLETTE. Your mother wouldn't like it.

SYLVIA. She's not here.

GILLETTE. But she will be. Think your mother will sign that contract?

SYLVIA. I don't know. [*Girlishly, but not flirtatiously.*] Why don't you tell me why you're interested in me?

GILLETTE. [*Leaning over the arm of chair.*] Don't tempt me, you little siren.

SYLVIA. I'm not.

GILLETTE. You're a regular little baby vamp.

SYLVIA. You mustn't. You're dreadfully bold.

GILLETTE. You like it, don't you?

SYLVIA. Uh huh. [*Giggling.*] It's funny, but you shouldn't——

GILLETTE. [*Leaning over so that his face is very close to* SYLVIA'S.] You shouldn't be so fascinating. [SYLVIA *is a little embarrassed, but is enjoying it.* GILLETTE, *feeling that*

he has impressed her sufficiently, turns away and in business-like tone and manner begins to question her.] Has your mother said anything about signing the contract?

SYLVIA. [*Disappointed.*] I don't know.

[*She rises slowly and goes to the mantel, her back toward* GILLETTE, *who is not looking at her.*

GILLETTE. Do you think your father will object?

SYLVIA. [*Impatiently.*] I don't know.

GILLETTE. Do you think that Alan will put his oar in to prevent your mother——

SYLVIA. [*Angrily.*] Oh, I don't know!

[*She stamps her foot and starts to go.* GILLETTE *realises his mistake.*

GILLETTE. Why, Sylvia, what's the matter?

SYLVIA. [*Flaring out.*] Oh, it's always mother, mother, mother. I'm sure Alan needn't worry about my flirt——

[*She stops abruptly and turns away, confused.* GILLETTE *smiles.*

GILLETTE. About your what?

SYLVIA. Oh, nothing.

GILLETTE. Flirting with me?

SYLVIA. I didn't say it.

GILLETTE. You were going to.

SYLVIA. I won't tell you.

[*Very much embarrassed, she runs away to the other side of the room.* GILLETTE *looks at her as though what she had said had given him an idea.*

GILLETTE. [*Slowly.*] It had never occurred to me. [SYLVIA *turns quickly.*] I mean, that you would.

SYLVIA. Well, I wouldn't, Mr. Dudley Gillette, so there!

[*She goes toward the door to the hall.* GILLETTE *is much amused.* NORA *shows in* PEGGY GIBBS.

SYLVIA. Oh, Peggy, dear! Nora, tell Mr. Alan that Miss Gibbs is here.

[NORA *exits.* GILLETTE *has turned and starts slightly at the sight of* PEGGY, *who is a girl of twenty-five, sincere, clear-thinking, practical, yet not lacking in*

feminine charm and humour. She wears a severely plain yet modish frock.

SYLVIA. Peggy, may I present Mr. Gillette?

GILLETTE. [*Bowing.*] Miss Gibbs.

PEGGY. [*Puzzled.*] I think we've met before.

GILLETTE. [*On his guard.*] Really?

SYLVIA. Where?

PEGGY. At the War Relief Bazaar in 1914. I was a volunteer there.

SYLVIA. The one there was all the scandal about?

GILLETTE. [*Casually.*] I do remember something about it. But I wasn't in New York then.

PEGGY. Then I'm mistaken.

GILLETTE. [*Impressively.*] Yes. I'm sure that if I ever had the pleasure of meeting you, it would have been utterly impossible for me to forget you.

[PEGGY, *annoyed at the flattery, turns away.* SYLVIA *is pleased and smiles at* GILLETTE. NANCY *enters, wearing a hat, carrying gloves and a parasol. She is followed by* MRS. WYNNE.

NANCY. I'm ready, Mr. Gillette.

SYLVIA. Oh, mother——

[NANCY *turns.* SYLVIA *and* PEGGY *advance to her.*

NANCY. [*Shaking hands.*] Oh, is this Miss Gibbs? Sylvia told me you were coming to tea. I'm so glad to meet you. I've heard of you from Sylvia and of course Alan's told me all about your wonderful brother.

PEGGY. This is a great pleasure for me. I've heard so much of you and I've been so thrilled by all the great things you've done.

NANCY. Oh, Sylvia, isn't that sweet! Oh, Biddy, isn't that charming! [*To* PEGGY.] This is Mrs. Wynne, one of my unit. I wonder if you are going to be very generous and forgive me if I run away for a few minutes? Something unexpected and important. I'll hurry back as fast as I can for I want to have a real visit with you.

PEGGY. Of course. Don't let me interfere.

NANCY. That's all very understanding of you. I won't be ten minutes. Sylvia will take excellent care of you.

[*She goes, followed by* MRS. WYNNE *and* GILLETTE. *They disappear through the garden,* PEGGY *watching them from the door as they go.*

SYLVIA. Well?

PEGGY. Oh, Sylvia, she's charming.

SYLVIA. Have I said too much about her?

PEGGY. Not half enough.

[ALAN *in immaculate flannels comes rushing in from the door to the hall.*

ALAN. Peggy! [PEGGY *turns.* ALAN *goes to her quickly and puts his arms around her.*] Don't look, Sylvia.

PEGGY. [*Expostulating.*] Oh, Alan!

[ALAN *kisses her.*

ALAN. Now, where's mother?

SYLVIA. She's gone to be photographed at the Club.

ALAN. What! That's the limit! Didn't she know Peggy was coming?

PEGGY. I've just met her and she's made her excuses and is coming right back.

ALAN. Oh!

PEGGY. You'd better "Oh." Sylvia, has he always spoken before he thinks?

SYLVIA. Always.

ALAN. Where's Dad?

SYLVIA. I'll get him. He is at Mrs. Brice's.

[*She goes.*

PEGGY. Oh, Alan, I'm going to love your mother. I hope she likes me.

ALAN. You should worry.

PEGGY. That's just what I'm doing—worrying.

ALAN. Well, if anybody in my family doesn't like you, you know what they can do, don't you?

PEGGY. Yes. Make it distinctly uncomfortable for you.

ALAN. Well, anyway, I'm going to announce our engagement today.

PEGGY. Why, if Sylvia had told me that I wouldn't have come. She said that you simply wanted to introduce me to your father and mother.

ALAN. I didn't tell her in what capacity.

PEGGY. Please, Alan, let your mother get to know me first. If you thrust me at her it may prejudice her.

ALAN. Nonsense. What's more, I'm going to tell them that we are to be married right away.

PEGGY. We are not. I'm not going to be rushed into marriage.

ALAN. Rushed? Why, I've known you *eight* weeks.

PEGGY. Yes, you had me engaged to you before I knew what was happening to me.

ALAN. Only way to handle you. If you get too much time to think——

PEGGY. I'm going to have a good long think before I get married.

ALAN. It's cold, then. Good-bye, darling.

[*He moves away.* PEGGY *follows him.*

PEGGY. Oh, be sensible. How can we be married?

ALAN. Why, you have a license and a ring and a minister——

PEGGY. Yes, and money that you've *earned, not* that you get from your father.

ALAN. Don't need his money. I've got a job.

PEGGY. What? What sort of a job?

ALAN. That's my secret.

PEGGY. Oh, is it so bad that you're ashamed of it?

ALAN. Bad enough to pay me thirty dollars a week!

PEGGY. I knew that you had hypnotic charm for women. What did you do to the man? Frighten him?

ALAN. No. He used to be my top sergeant.

PEGGY. Oh, that explains it.

ALAN. I thought you'd be pleased.

PEGGY. Did he get himself a little job? Oh, darling, I'm only funning. I'm very proud of you.

ALAN. Then you'll marry me?

PEGGY. Can't we wait until——

ALAN. Look here. I postponed our marriage to wait for a family reunion that didn't "reune." Then I had to wait until I got a job. Well, I have one. Now it's up to you. If you don't want to marry me, say so.

PEGGY. I do, Alan. You know I do. But I want your father and mother to approve. There is a chance they mightn't like me.

ALAN. You're not marrying them. Who are you marrying, darling?

PEGGY. [*Mischievously.*] None of your business.

ALAN. Just for that, you sassy little devil——

[*He tries to take* PEGGY *in his arms. She dodges and runs away.* ALAN *catches her and swings her around into his arms. They are laughing and struggling, their backs to the door to the terrace at which* JEFFREY *appears. He stands amazed at what seems to be* ALAN'S *efforts to kiss a girl against her will. He frowns in annoyance and starts toward them.*

JEFFREY. [*Sharply.*] Alan!

ALAN. [*Over his shoulder.*] It's all right, dad. We're engaged. [PEGGY, *who has ceased to struggle at the sound of* JEFFREY'S *voice, is kissed by* ALAN, *then released. She is much embarrassed.* ALAN *crosses to* JEFFREY, *leading* PEGGY *by the hand.*] Dad, this is Peggy.

JEFFREY. Peggy?

ALAN. Peggy Gibbs.

JEFFREY. [*Coldly.*] How do you do, Miss Gibbs?

PEGGY. Mr. Fair.

ALAN. Well, dad, I suppose you're surprised.

JEFFREY. [*Sarcastically.*] Has the engagement just occurred?

ALAN. Oh, no; it's a month old.

JEFFREY. Really, Alan, I——

ALAN. Dad, don't be hurt because we didn't tell you.

PEGGY. Alan didn't want to spoil his mother's homecoming by the announcement.

ALAN. It wasn't my idea at all: it was Peggy's.

JEFFREY. Why should this engagement distress your mother?

ALAN. You see, dad, Peggy is my "buddy's" sister.

JEFFREY. Yes?

PEGGY. Oh, Alan, let us be frank. [*To* JEFFREY.] It annoys him when I say it, but I'm not of your class. I'm a stenographer.

ALAN. [*Proudly.*] She's a private secretary.

JEFFREY. What is the difference?

PEGGY. Twenty dollars a week.

JEFFREY. Thank you; I deserved that.

ALAN. Well, Dad, are you for *me* or "agin" me?

JEFFREY. That depends.

ALAN. On what?

PEGGY. [*Hastily.*] On me. You can't expect your father to give a snap judgment on a person he has just met. Suppose you leave us together so that we can have a little talk.

[*She moves away.*

JEFFREY. A very good idea.

[ALAN *goes to* PEGGY.

ALAN. [*Whispering.*] Don't be nervous, dear. Dad's aces. [*He kisses* PEGGY, *then goes to* JEFFREY.] Now, Dad, no heavy father stuff.

[*He leaves them.*

JEFFREY. Won't you be seated?

PEGGY. Thank you.

[*She sits on the couch.* JEFFREY *brings a chair and sits facing her.*]

JEFFREY. Well, Miss Gibbs?

PEGGY. To begin with, Mr. Fair, my family and I are, socially speaking, a total loss.

JEFFREY. In what way?

PEGGY. My father is the village postman. My brother is now in the Detective Bureau, but was a policeman.

JEFFREY. I see.

PEGGY. [*Drily.*] Yes, I thought you would. My mother does her own work, but the weekly washing is sent out.

JEFFREY. Very interesting, especially that bit about the laundry.

PEGGY. I graduated from High School, then went to Brown's Business College. I am now employed at forty dollars a week as a private secretary in the office of a firm of lawyers, O'Brien and Rosenweber.

JEFFREY. I know of them.

PEGGY. I am twenty-three years old, quite healthy, am supposed to have a good disposition. Oh, there is one thing more: I'm a suffragette, and while I am not militant, I do parade. I believe that is all.

JEFFREY. And you have Thursdays off? My dear Miss Gibbs, I'm not interviewing you as a prospective servant, but as a possible daughter-in-law.

PEGGY. Well, you wanted to know about me, didn't you?

JEFFREY. You suggested the interview. I appreciate that it's a very difficult one for you. It isn't exactly easy for me. Yet, if I didn't learn something of the girl my son wishes to marry, I would be failing in my duty as a father, wouldn't I?

PEGGY. Yes.

JEFFREY. Why are you so on the defensive?

PEGGY. Possibly because I'm a little afraid.

JEFFREY. Surely not of me? Unless you're marrying Alan for——

PEGGY. For money and this sort of thing? No! Not that I wouldn't like it and enjoy it, but only if Alan earned it. And he will in time. He's made a start. He has a job.

JEFFREY. Why didn't he come to me for a position?

PEGGY. Oh, Mr. Fair, please don't help him. That would spoil all my plans.

JEFFREY. [*Surprised.*] How?

PEGGY. It's better for him to be entirely on his own.

JEFFREY. [*Puzzled.*] Why?

PEGGY. The dear boy is full of the brotherhood of man.

He got that from the trenches, and if he is going to keep it, it's necessary for him to live simply for a time at least.

JEFFREY. Sounds to me like a very serious courtship.

PEGGY. Is anything more serious than marriage? I'm scared to death of it.

JEFFREY. [*Amused.*] Why?

PEGGY. I have to give up a great deal of my liberty and I want to be sure it's worth it. Oh, dear, life and what to do with it and Alan's problem and mine seems so much simpler on our back veranda. I suppose my family are right.

JEFFREY. [*Surprised.*] Doesn't your family approve of the marriage?

PEGGY. Not at all.

JEFFREY. [*Indignantly.*] Well, I—— Don't they like my son?

[*He rises.*

PEGGY. [*Smiling.*] I like you for that.

JEFFREY. [*Sputtering.*] Well, I——

PEGGY. Oh, they are devoted to Alan, but they can't see any happiness in the marriage for me. They're afraid that the two families won't harmonise.

JEFFREY. That's true; they mightn't. [*There is a slight pause.*] It seems to me you love my son.

PEGGY. Very much.

JEFFREY. Then if I were Alan and you were you, I'd marry you and say damn the families.

PEGGY. Oh, Mr. Fair!

[*She rises impulsively, starts as though to embrace him, catches herself and recedes a little.* JEFFREY *follows her, inviting her to embrace him. They laugh.*

JEFFREY. Now we will put Alan out of his misery. [*Calls.*] Alan! Come here, young man.

[ALAN, *who has been in the hall awaiting the verdict, comes in quickly. He looks anxiously at* JEFFREY.

ALAN. Well?

JEFFREY. Son, I hope you appreciate how lucky you are.

ALAN. [*Joyfully.*] Dad! [*He goes quickly to* PEGGY.] Excuse us.

[*He kisses her.*

JEFFREY. I could do with one myself. [PEGGY *crosses to* JEFFREY *and offers her lips to him shyly. He kisses her tenderly.*] Now, young man, what is this job?

ALAN. It's with the Iverson Construction Company. Time-keeper.

JEFFREY. Well, you held the interscholastic record of America for wasting time. It's up to you to keep a little.

ALAN. Dad, that's pretty awful.

JEFFREY. Peggy smiled.

ALAN. Brazen truckling to her father-in-law.

SYLVIA. [*Running in.*] Is it all right?

JEFFREY. If you mean Peggy, she's very much all right.

SYLVIA. [*Delightedly.*] Oh, wait until you know her. Now I wish mother would come.

JEFFREY. So she went to the club after all.

SYLVIA. Yes. She won't be long.

[*She goes up to the door to the terrace and looks off toward the entrance to the garden.*

JEFFREY. [*Annoyed.*] Did she know that Peggy was coming here this afternoon?

PEGGY. [*Hastily.*] Oh, yes, I met Mrs. Fair and she explained.

JEFFREY. Left you here. That's most annoying.

SYLVIA. Here is mother now.

[NANCY *hurries in.*

NANCY. You see, Miss Gibbs, I haven't been long. Oh, you haven't had tea. Sylvia, dear, take mother's things and tell them to bring tea right in. [SYLVIA, *taking* NANCY'S *hat and gloves, runs out.* NANCY *goes to the telephone on the table.*] I must 'phone to the Colony Club right away.

JEFFREY. [*Irritably.*] Can't that wait?

NANCY. It's very important.

JEFFREY. [*Severely.*] More important than to pay some attention to the girl your son is going to marry?

[NANCY *looks at* JEFFREY, *dazed, then slowly turns her regard upon* PEGGY, *then on* ALAN.

NANCY. Alan, how long have you been engaged?

ALAN. Since the day before you came home.

NANCY. A month ago. Why didn't you tell me?

PEGGY. I'm to blame, Mrs. Fair. I didn't want Alan to tell you because I feared it might distress you and spoil your home-coming.

NANCY. Why should it do either?

ALAN. Peggy's afraid that because she's a stenographer—you——

NANCY. What right had Miss Gibbs to judge how I would receive the news of my son's engagement?

PEGGY. I can see now what I did might be misjudged, but really my motives——

ALAN. It isn't necessary to explain your motives.

JEFFREY. I can vouch for Peggy.

ALAN. Thank you, Dad, but no one needs to vouch for her. The fact that I am going to marry her, that Sylvia loves her, and that you approve, should be enough for mother.

[NANCY *flinches, but is so shocked by the news that she says nothing, simply looks at* ALAN. *Her eyes fill with tears, her lips quiver, and to conceal her emotion she turns away and goes to the door to the terrace.*

PEGGY. Mrs. Fair, I know what you are thinking—feeling. [NANCY *is silent.* PEGGY, *distressed, turns to* JEFFREY.] It is much better that I should go.

JEFFREY. Perhaps it would be as well. Alan, take Peggy to the station.

[ALAN *and* PEGGY *go.* NANCY *turns, stretches out her hand as if to stop them. Then, covering her face with her hands, she stands crying silently.* JEFFREY, *ashamed of his outburst, man-like takes refuge in irritation. He goes to the table, picks up a paper and*

sits, making a pretence of reading. He waits, expecting NANCY *to speak, then breaks the silence.*

JEFFREY. You've made a nice mess of things.

NANCY. [*Surprised.*] I?

JEFFREY. Yes. If you hadn't been so keen on publicity, all this needn't have happened.

NANCY. [*Coming toward him.*] Do you suppose if I had been told why Miss Gibbs was coming here that I would have allowed a stupid photograph to interfere? Isn't Alan's engagement something that could have been told me without shocking me, bewildering me so that—— Oh, you've made me seem ungracious to my boy. It was wicked, cruel of you.

[*She turns away and sits on the couch, crying.*

JEFFREY. How did I know you were going to take it like this?

NANCY. What did you expect me to do?

JEFFREY. Open your arms to her as any mother should.

NANCY. How long have you known of this engagement?

JEFFREY. Not until today.

NANCY. And did you welcome her with outstretched arms at once?

JEFFREY. Frankly, I was surprised! But after I had had a talk with her——

NANCY. Exactly. You had an opportunity to judge of her before you gave your approval, but I am expected to give at once the son I've loved, watched over, prayed for, to a girl of whom I know nothing.

JEFFREY. I told you I vouched for her.

[NANCY, *in a rage, springs to her feet.*

NANCY. What's that to me? He's my son, too.

JEFFREY. That's jealousy talking.

NANCY. Is it strange that I should be jealous? Isn't it hard for any mother at first to give her son to another woman? If Alan had had any right feeling for me he would have told me tenderly, tactfully, that he loved someone else more than me. Instead, he let you thrust the fact at me.

I don't know what I have ever done that he should have told you, even Sylvia, before me; made me feel like an outsider.

JEFFREY. Who is to blame for that? You put yourself outside your home. You can't hope to receive Alan's confidence if you are never here to get it. You can't go on neglecting your family——

NANCY. [*Indignantly.*] What? I give up everybody and everything belonging to me and endure privations, horrors, because I think it's my greatest duty, and then I am neglecting my family! [*Bitterly.*] My family seems to have gotten along very well without me. Ever since I came home you and Alan have resented everything I've done.

JEFFREY. We don't approve of what you've been doing.

[*He rises and begins to pace up and down.*

NANCY. [*Scornfully.*] Approve! Must I secure the approval of my husband and my son for what I think best to do?

JEFFREY. Your desire to appear in public, for instance?

NANCY. [*Very calmly.*] If you had been overseas and had been urged to appear in public, would you have had to ask my approval? No. It would have been the perfectly natural thing for you to do.

JEFFREY. It's not the same thing.

NANCY. Because I'm a woman. Well, this war has settled one thing definitely. A woman's work counts for just as much as a man's and she is entitled to all the rewards it brings her.

[*Her calmness maddens* JEFFREY. *He advances on her furiously.*

JEFFREY. You've done your duty by your country, but, by God, you're capitalising it.

NANCY. [*Turning upon him.*] Jeffrey?

JEFFREY. Ever since you've been home you've thought of everything but your duty to your family. All you think of is your appearance at public functions, getting your name and photograph in print. Can you deny that you are eager

to sign that contract so that you can make a triumphant tour of the country, telling the great American public how you helped win the war? Well, you'll put an end to all this publicity. You'll stop all these ridiculous lectures. You'll tear up that contract. You'll give up this tour and remain here where you belong.

NANCY. [*Very quietly.*] And why must I do all this? Why must I remain here where I belong?

JEFFREY. [*Emphatically.*] Because I am your husband and I forbid you to go.

[*They look at each other for an instant in silence.* JEFFREY, *feeling that he is master of the situation, walks slowly away and stands at the fireplace, his back toward* NANCY, *who smiles satirically, then goes quietly to the table. She sits, draws the contract, which is on the table, to her, and signs it. At the sound of the scratching of her pen* JEFFREY *turns quickly. He crumples the folded newspaper in his hand and throws it irritably on the chair.* NANCY *rises. They are standing facing each other in defiance as the* CURTAIN FALLS.

THE THIRD ACT

The sitting-room of JEFFREY FAIR'S *apartment in a New York hotel. The decorations, furnishings and appointments are tasteful, luxurious and characteristic of a modern "smart" hotel. On the left are double doors to the private hall and a door to a bedroom; at the back is a large window and at the right a fireplace and a door to another bedroom. A console table with a mirror over it stands against the right wall below the fireplace, in front of which is a Lawson sofa. On the opposite side of the room is a writing desk, near the window a small table with a telephone, and in the centre an oval table to the left of which is an arm-chair. There is a small chair in front of the desk, another at the window and a third at the back of the centre table. There are no photographs, books nor flowers; in fact, there is a noticeable lack of any attempt to create a home-like atmosphere, and, although the room is brilliantly lighted, the curtains drawn and a fire in the grate, the effect is one of dreariness in contrast to the charm in the environment in the preceding acts. It is an evening in October.*

As the curtain rises JEFFREY *enters from the door at the right of the room. He wears informal evening dress and carries an overcoat and a hat which he places on the sofa. Then going to the doors to the hall he opens them, showing across the hall a door, on which he knocks. There is a slight pause and he knocks again, calling* "Sylvia." *There is no response. He opens the door, looks into the room, then closing the door returns and goes to the telephone.*

JEFFREY. Give me the desk, please. [*A pause.*] Is this the desk? This is Mr. Fair speaking. Are you quite sure my daughter did not leave a note for Mrs. Fair? If you find one send it up. By the way, what is the correct time? Nine twenty-three. Thank you.

[JEFFREY *sets his watch, then takes a cigarette, lights it and sits on the couch. His attitude is one of deep dejection. There is a slight pause, then* ALAN *enters from the room at the right.*

JEFFREY. [*Turning to him.*] Well, son?

ALAN. [*Happily.*] It's all right.

JEFFREY. Made it up with your mother? [ALAN *nods.*] That's fine. Did she mention Mrs. Fair, Jr.?

ALAN. Yes. She inquired very cordially for Peggy. [*He sits.*

JEFFREY. Did she accept Peggy's invitation for dinner?

ALAN. She couldn't. Her secretary reminded her that she was to be the guest of honour at some banquet or other.

JEFFREY. [*Satirically.*] I suppose that's why she came home.

ALAN. Why wasn't Sylvia here to meet mother?

JEFFREY. She wasn't expected until the day after tomorrow and Sylvia had made a dinner engagement that she didn't care to break.

ALAN. That's queer. I wonder if they've had a quarrel?

JEFFREY. What gave you that idea?

ALAN. Well, Peggy and I have never been able to get anything out of Sylvia as to why she remained only a month on tour with mother.

JEFFREY. I can understand just what happened. Her mother was entertained a great deal. That was part of the game of being the famous Mrs. Fair. It wasn't possible to include Sylvia in all of the functions. Naturally she was bored. So she came home.

ALAN. Considering they haven't seen each other for two months and that this is mother's first night at home, it is very selfish of Sylvia not to give up one party.

JEFFREY. [*Irritably.*] Sylvia's had to make her life without her mother and can't be expected to drop everything whenever she chooses to appear on the scene.

ALAN. All right, Dad, all right. You are so touchy about Sylvia.

JEFFREY. You've shown a disposition of late to criticise your sister, and I don't like it.

ALAN. Don't let us scrap about Sylvia. I'm sorry if I have seemed unkind. But you know, Dad, you are spoiling her.

JEFFREY. Oh, Hell, why not? A man's got to have some woman to spoil. Sylvia's sweet and loving to me. I was mighty glad to have her home again. It would have been a damn sight better for me if I had never let her go away.

ALAN. Now with mother at home, I suppose you'll give up these rooms and go back to the country?

JEFFREY. She's going on another tour.

[*He rises and begins to walk about the room restlessly.*

ALAN. I am disappointed. Damn Gillette.

JEFFREY. It isn't his fault.

ALAN. [*Surprised.*] You're not sticking up for him?

JEFFREY. He's not a bad sort when you get to know him.

ALAN. You don't like him?

JEFFREY. No. But I no longer hold him responsible for your mother going lecturing. If it hadn't been he it would have been some other manager.

ALAN. Gillette's around here a good deal, isn't he?

JEFFREY. Yes. [*Bitterly.*] I wouldn't deprive Sylvia from seeing a man who knows a damn sight better what her mother's doing than I do.

[*He sits behind.*

ALAN. Sylvia is around with Gillette and his crowd a lot, isn't she?

JEFFREY. Yes, he's been very kind to her. He's introduced her to his friends.

ALAN. You've met them?

JEFFREY. Casually.

ALAN. Dancing a good deal, isn't she?

JEFFREY. Everybody does. Keeps good hours, always tells me where she's going.

ALAN. Where is she tonight?

JEFFREY. I ought to know. I don't remember. [*Defiantly.*] Why?

ALAN. [*Apologetically.*] Oh, nothing. It's getting late and I wondered if I would see her before I go home.

JEFFREY. [*Smiling.*] She'll come toddling in soon, bless her. I hope she's had a good time.

ALAN. By the way, what's become of Angy Brice? Sylvia never mentions her.

JEFFREY. [*Slightly confused.*] She hasn't seen Mrs. Brice. Don't you remember I had this place ready for Sylvia when she came home? I thought she'd find the country dull without her mother.

[*Slightly embarrassed, he picks up a magazine, turns over its leaves.* ALAN *watches him narrowly as* JEFFREY *replies to his questions.*

ALAN. [*Casually.*] Hasn't Mrs. Brice been in town?

JEFFREY. Yes.

ALAN. Have you seen her?

JEFFREY. [*Carelessly.*] Occasionally.

ALAN. Odd Sylvia hasn't looked her up. They used to be such great pals.

JEFFREY. Angy's too old for Sylvia, and Sylvia's made new friends.

ALAN. [*Disarmed.*] When mother goes, Peggy and I must see Sylvia oftener. I'm afraid we've been rather selfish.

JEFFREY. Every newly married couple has that right. My boy, if your wife wants to associate with you, don't discourage her.

ALAN. Peggy works all day. I study all evening, so we don't have time to get bored with each other.

JEFFREY. I wish Peggy would give up her job. What

the devil's the good of all my money? I can't spend it all on Sylvia.

ALAN. Well, dad, if a wife wants to work these days, you have to let her.

JEFFREY. Yes, but sometimes I wonder in this modern scheme of things where in hell the husband belongs.

ALAN. Why don't you put up an argument about this new tour?

JEFFREY. I put up a good one once, but she went, didn't she? No, son.

ALAN. [*Eagerly.*] Perhaps if I talked to her——

JEFFREY. [*Rising.*] Don't you complicate things with her by trying to force anything for me. Let me give you a bit of advice. Never try to play God for your family. You only raise the devil.

ALAN. Very well, dad, you know best.

JEFFREY. [*Ruefully.*] Son, I don't know anything, any more. Don't you worry about me. So long as I have Sylvia I can stagger along.

[*He crosses and gets his hat and coat.*

ALAN. [*Surprised.*] Are you going out?

JEFFREY. Yes.

ALAN. [*Rising.*] But mother?

JEFFREY. I wouldn't dream of intruding. She took great pains to tell me at dinner that she had a stack of mail waiting for her a mile high. Can I drop you at the subway?

ALAN. I'm not going home. Peggy's at the office tonight, working on an important case. I'm going to call for her. Anyway I think I'll leave a little line for Sylvia.

JEFFREY. [*Pleased.*] Fine! Good night.

ALAN. Good night.

JEFFREY. Give my love to Peggy. [*He turns to leave the room, stops, hesitates, turns to* ALAN.] Tell her if she wants me tomorrow night, I'd be very glad to come.

ALAN. [*Going to him quickly.*] Why, Dad, we always want you.

[JEFFREY *takes* ALAN'S *outstretched hand, puts his arm around his shoulder.*

JEFFREY. [*Smiling.*] Good night.

[*He goes.* ALAN *watches him. His lips quiver; there are tears in his eyes. He brushes them away and is starting towards the desk, when from the door at the left of the room* NANCY *enters. She wears a simple evening gown.*

NANCY. Oh, Alan, I'm so glad you haven't gone. I have been thinking it over and I'm not going to that boring banquet. I'm going to dine with you instead.

ALAN. That's bully of you, mother. But it isn't necessary. You can come another night.

NANCY. No, no. I insist. I want to telephone your wife now.

ALAN. Peggy's not at home. She's at the office tonight. I'm going down to fetch her.

NANCY. I've a nice idea. I wonder if she would be too tired to drop in on the way home.

ALAN. [*Surprised.*] Tonight?

NANCY. It's early, and [*shyly*] if Peggy is willing, I'd love to kiss and make up.

ALAN. Mother!

[*He goes quickly to* NANCY *and takes her in his arms. She begins to cry. He kisses her and soothes her.*

NANCY. My boy, my boy!

ALAN. [*Very much affected.*] There—there—mother.

NANCY. Alan, promise me you'll never be on the "outs" with me again?

ALAN. I won't. I won't.

NANCY. It's almost made an old woman of me.

ALAN. It's been tough on me. I was wrong.

NANCY. No, no, I was to blame.

ALAN. I won't stand for that.

NANCY. Oh, my dear, it doesn't matter who was wrong, so that it's all right now.

ALAN. You bet it is, but—but——

NANCY. We won't spoil this by any post-mortems. [*She kisses him.*] Did you see your father?

ALAN. Yes.

NANCY. Where is he?

ALAN. He went out.

NANCY. [*Disappointedly.*] Oh!

ALAN. He thought you were too busy to be disturbed.

NANCY. I sent my secretary away, but it doesn't matter.

ALAN. I must go for Peggy. She'll be on her ear.

NANCY. Don't you think you had better rescue her? Now hurry right back. Oh, Alan, I have something for her and I want you to see if you think she will like it. [*Tenderly.*] I'm going to see you and Peggy very often before I go away again.

ALAN. When do you go?

NANCY. I don't know just what arrangements Mr. Gillette has made. He is coming to see me about them to-night.

ALAN. Mother, do you think you ought to go? I—mean—ought to come to us instead of to that banquet?

NANCY. That's all settled. I put them on the trail of another celebrity.

[*She laughs and goes into her room.* ALAN *is smiling happily, humming a little tune when the doors to the hall open and* SYLVIA *enters. She is completely transformed. In dress, coiffure and manner, she is the modern "cutie." Her face is rouged, her lips painted. On her head at a rakish angle is an ermine toque and wrapped about her throat is an ermine stole. She saunters over to the mirror at the right, greeting* ALAN *as she passes him.*

SYLVIA. [*Indifferently.*] Hello, Alan.

ALAN. Hello, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. Mother here yet?

ALAN. Yes.

SYLVIA. [*"Primping."*] What about friend wife?

ALAN. It's all right. [*Indignantly.*] Why weren't you here to meet mother?

SYLVIA. [*Carelessly.*] I had a very special date.

ALAN. [*Disgustedly.*] With that Gillette, I suppose.

SYLVIA. That's my affair.

ALAN. How you or anyone else can——

SYLVIA. [*Crossly.*] Alan Fair, don't you dare to knock Gillie. You don't like him—I do.

[*Enter* NANCY *smiling happily. She sees* SYLVIA *and is so shocked by the change in her appearance that she stops speechless. The little jewelry box that she is carrying falls from her head.* SYLVIA, *quite oblivious of the effect she has made on* NANCY, *runs towards her.*

SYLVIA. Oh, hello, mother.

[NANCY *cannot speak.* SYLVIA *surprised, stops. There is a slight pause.*

NANCY. [*Inarticulately.*] Sylvia! [*Heartbrokenly.*] Sylvia! Sylvia!

[*She rushes to* SYLVIA, *folds her in her arms, kissing her frantically.* SYLVIA *is happy, but rather puzzled.*

SYLVIA. I was awfully sorry not to be here. You got my note?

NANCY. No.

SYLVIA. Isn't that the limit? I gave it to the clerk myself. I'll just ask him "what's the idea." [*She turns toward the telephone, and sees a hat box on the table.*] Oh, the darn thing came at last. [*She opens the box and takes out a "freakish" hat.*] I was going to wear this tonight. [*She holds it up admiringly.*] Isn't that a sweetie?

ALAN. [*Disgustedly.*] Where did you get it?

SYLVIA. [*Going to the mirror.*] At Francine's. She makes for all the smart chorus girls. [*She puts it on, then strikes a pose.*] How do I look?

ALAN. Just like a movie "cutie."

NANCY. [*Reprovingly.*] Alan!

SYLVIA. Oh, mother, don't mind Alan. He's always knocking my taste in clothes.

[*She is furious, and, snatching the hat off her head, throws it into the box and tosses it into a corner of the room. As she turns away,* NANCY, *who has been watching her in amazement, goes to* ALAN.

NANCY. Oh, what have you all done to her?

ALAN. It isn't our fault.

NANCY. No, it's mine. [*A slight pause.*] Alan, say good night to your sister.

SYLVIA. Where's daddy?

ALAN. He's gone out. Mad?

SYLVIA. [*Kissing him.*] Not so you'd notice it.

ALAN. See you later, mother.

[*He goes.*

NANCY. Well, darling, glad to have your mother home again?

SYLVIA. Believe me, I am.

[*She is wearing her hair in exaggerated curves over her ears.* NANCY *puts her hands on either side of* SYLVIA'S *face and pushes the hair gently off her cheeks.*

NANCY. Why do you wear your hair like that?

SYLVIA. Everyone in my crowd does.

NANCY. Come and sit down. I want to know all that you've been doing.

SYLVIA. I wrote to you.

NANCY. Not so often lately.

SYLVIA. [*Resentfully.*] With somethin' doin' every minute I didn't have the time.

NANCY. [*Quickly.*] I'm not reproaching you, darling. Let's have a nice snuggly time.

[*She sits in the arm-chair, taking* SYLVIA *on her lap. Then drawing* SYLVIA'S *head down on her shoulder, puts her arms about her, kisses her.* SYLVIA *begins to cry.*

SYLVIA. My, I've missed this.

NANCY. [*Very much affected.*] So have I, dear.

[*She takes her handkerchief and wipes* SYLVIA'S *eyes and at the same time seizes the opportunity to remove a little of the rouge from* SYLVIA'S *face and lips.*

NANCY. Now let's begin at the beginning.

SYLVIA. Let's skip the beginning. It was horrid.

NANCY. [*Surprised.*] In what way, dear?

SYLVIA. I was so lonesome.

NANCY. As soon as I knew you were to be at this hotel, instead of at home I wired to Bridget Wynne. Didn't she look you up?

SYLVIA. Oh, all the women came once. Mrs. Wynne gave me a luncheon and a box party and asked all the girls in our set. It was a perfect lemon.

NANCY. How?

SYLVIA. For all the attention they gave to me I might as well not have been there.

NANCY. Why should they be rude to you?

SYLVIA. They didn't mean to be. I didn't know all the little intimate things they talked about. One girl's mother was doing this for her, and another one's mother was doing that—anyway I felt like an outsider in what should have been my own crowd. When I got home I just bawled my head off, and daddy said we wouldn't bother with any of them again, but it was pretty awful especially as I didn't have Angy to fall back on.

NANCY. No?

SYLVIA. Daddy said you didn't like me to be intimate with her.

NANCY. I see. Haven't you seen Alan and Peggy?

SYLVIA. It's terribly dull at their flat. They are so crazy about each other that half the time they don't know you're around.

[*They laugh.*

NANCY. Didn't father go about with you?

SYLVIA. Oh, yes, daddy's a darling, but he is old. Gillie's been my life saver.

NANCY. [*Mystified.*] Who is Gillie?

SYLVIA. Mr. Gillette. He took me to a tea one day at a dancing place and introduced me to his friends. When he found I liked them, he said, "Sylvia, this little old town is yours. We'll take it all apart and see what makes it tick."

NANCY. That doesn't sound like Mr. Gillette.

SYLVIA. Oh, he puts on his grand manners with you. You don't know the real Gillie.

NANCY. [*Thoughtfully.*] No, I don't believe I do. [*A slight pause.*] Who are these friends?

SYLVIA. I don't know. Just New Yorkers.

NANCY. Has your father met them?

SYLVIA. Oh, yes.

NANCY. Has he gone around with you?

SYLVIA. Not to the lively parties.

NANCY. [*Shocked.*] My dear, who chaperoned you?

SYLVIA. A woman pal of Gillie's.

NANCY. Is she a married woman?

SYLVIA. [*Giggling.*] Is she? Three times.

NANCY. How awful!

SYLVIA. [*Protestingly.*] She's terribly nice. You must know her. So sweet to me. Takes me motoring in the park almost every afternoon.

NANCY. Where did you meet her, dear?

SYLVIA. At a party at "The Drowsy Saint."

NANCY. Where's that?

SYLVIA. It's a new freak place in the village.

NANCY. Who took you *there?*

SYLVIA. Gillie. He's a sweetie lamb, and so generous. He spends money like water.

NANCY. [*Puzzled.*] He does?

SYLVIA. Yes, he's taken me on parties to all the cabarets, 'n' everywhere.

NANCY. Does your father know that you go to these places?

SYLVIA. Sure.

NANCY. He never objects?

SYLVIA. Why should he when you go with your own crowd, there's no harm in them, is there?

NANCY. They are not exactly the places for a girl who has been brought up as you have been. Is Mr. Gillette always your escort to these parties?

SYLVIA. [*Smiling.*] He's my "gentleman friend."

NANCY. He doesn't make love to you?

SYLVIA. [*Giggling.*] No, but I guess he'd like to.

NANCY. Darling, you mustn't say such things. It isn't nice.

SYLVIA. [*Sulkily.*] Why not?

NANCY. Well, nice girls don't,—that's all.

SYLVIA. [*Resentfully.*] What else don't they do?

NANCY. [*Hesitatingly.*] Well, dear, they don't go to the places you have been going, and they don't use rouge, or wear hats from Francine's.

SYLVIA. All the women in my crowd do.

NANCY. Then I think you're going with the wrong crowd.

SYLVIA. [*Indignantly.*] How do you know? You've never seen any of them. They may not belong, but they know how to be kind.

NANCY. Sylvia, I'm sorry, I don't mean to criticise——

SYLVIA. [*Rising in a fury of rage.*] But you are, you are! Daddy is the only one that never finds fault with me. He's the only one that loves me really.

[NANCY, *horrified at the implication that she does not love* SYLVIA, *rises quickly, grasps her in her arms, and almost roughly places her hand over* SYLVIA'S *mouth. She stands there crucified by the realisation of the fact that she has apparently lost the love of her child.*

NANCY. Oh, my dear, my dear,—never say that to me again. [*She pauses a moment, then very tenderly.*] It isn't always kind to allow you to do just as you please.

SYLVIA. [*Sullenly.*] Doesn't everyone else in this family do as they darn please?

NANCY. [*Hopelessly.*] Yes, I suppose we do.

[*There is a slight pause.* SYLVIA *looks defiantly at* NANCY, *who moves slowly across to the fireplace where she stands, her elbows resting on the mantelpiece, her face buried in her hands. The telephone bell rings sharply.* SYLVIA *turns quickly to answer it.*

SYLVIA. Yes. [*Turning to* NANCY.] Dudley's downstairs. If you don't want to be bothered I can see him in the lounge.

NANCY. Ask him to come up.

SYLVIA. Have Mr. Gillette come right up. [*To* NANCY.] Were you expecting him?

NANCY. Yes, he's coming to talk to me on business.

SYLVIA. I want to talk to him too, but I hadn't better butt in on your party.

NANCY. It won't interfere, dear.

SYLVIA. I've a message for Gillie from the bunch.

NANCY. Can't you give it to Mr. Gillette now?

SYLVIA. [*Defiantly.*] Any objection to my seeing him alone?

NANCY. Why, none at all, dear; I'll let you know as soon as we have finished.

[*The buzzer at the double door sounds.*

SYLVIA. Come in. [GILLETTE *enters.*] Oh, there you are. I thought you were going with us to dinner tonight.

[GILLETTE, *who has entered smilingly, frowns in annoyance at* SYLVIA, *and motions her to silence; then smiling suavely, advances toward* NANCY.

GILLETTE. Good evening, Mrs. Fair. It's a very great pleasure to see you again.

[NANCY *acknowledges* GILLETTE'S *greeting coldly.*

SYLVIA. Mother, when you're through with Gillie, have them page me in the lounge. I'll go down and hear a little jazz.

[*She smiles sweetly at* GILLETTE, *who turns and smiles at her. She starts towards the door into the hall.* NANCY *crosses quickly to her.*

NANCY. No, Sylvia, you will wait in my room, please.

[SYLVIA *turns angrily, looks at* NANCY; *there is a brief clash of wills, then* SYLVIA *goes into* NANCY'S *room, slamming the door.* NANCY *sinks wearily into the chair and sits staring before her, lost in thought.* GILLETTE *places his hat, cane and gloves on the sofa, then approaches* NANCY.

GILLETTE. [*Effusively.*] Mrs. Fair, I must congratulate you on the success of your tour. It was phenomenal. I am proud to have had the privilege of presenting you to the American public. [NANCY *makes no reply.* GILLETTE *looks at her in surprise.*] I trust that you have found it agreeable to appear under my management. [*There is no response and* GILLETTE *looks at her again.*] I hope our association will continue. I've secured even better terms for the new tour.

[*He sits.*

NANCY. I am not going on another tour.

GILLETTE. [*Astounded.*] You are not going on—but Mrs. Fair, all the arrangements have been made.

NANCY. They will have to be cancelled.

GILLETTE. But you agreed to it by letter. You 'phoned me to bring these contracts tonight.

NANCY. Things have occurred that have made me change my mind.

GILLETTE. Are you dissatisfied with me?

NANCY. No. But I can't go on.

GILLETTE. You can't mean that you are going to give up all your triumphs.

NANCY. [*Satirically.*] "Triumphs!"

GILLETTE. Why, Mrs. Fair, I am leaving tonight for Montreal to arrange for your appearance in Canada. The people in the East haven't heard you talk of your great work.

NANCY. Mr. Gillette, there is nothing that could induce me to talk of my great work again. [*A pause.*] I will be very much obliged if you will bring me an accounting tomorrow.

GILLETTE. [*Nervously.*] Tomorrow? [*He rises quickly.*

NANCY. Yes. I think there is about fifteen thousand dollars due.

GILLETTE. [*Stammering.*] Why—why—I won't be able to make a settlement tomorrow. It will take the bookkeeper several days to make out a statement.

NANCY. Let me have it as soon as possible, as I am going to re-open our house in the country. And now I believe Sylvia has some message for you. I will send her in and you can say good-bye to her.

[*She rises and goes to the door to her room.*

GILLETTE. [*Astonished.*] Good-bye?

NANCY. [*Turning to him.*] I think it wiser. Sylvia has been telling me of your kindness to her. I don't wish to seem ungrateful, but I would rather you did not see her again, at least for the present.

GILLETTE. [*Angrily.*] Are you insinuating that I am not good enough to associate with your daughter?

NANCY. I never insinuate, Mr. Gillette. If I must speak more plainly, I will, and I hope you will not resent it.

GILLETTE. [*Rudely.*] Well——

NANCY. Sylvia's story of her friendship with you has made me realise that you and I have rather different standards as to the sort of associates and amusements that are suitable for girls of her age and up-bringing.

GILLETTE. [*Sneeringly.*] She enjoyed the associates and the amusements.

NANCY. Possibly, but I am sure that she will like much more the ones I intend to provide for her from now on. When may I expect the statement?

GILLETTE. The day after tomorrow.

NANCY. Good night, Mr. Gillette.

GILLETTE. Good night, Mrs. Fair.

[NANCY *goes into her room.* GILLETTE *walks up and down. He is deeply annoyed, worried. Enter* SYLVIA. *She runs across to him.*

SYLVIA. Oh, Gillie, the bunch said to tell you——

GILLETTE. [*Irritably.*] Oh, hang the bunch.

SYLVIA. Why, Dudley, what's the matter?

GILLETTE. Your mother has thrown me down. She has cancelled her tour.

SYLVIA. [*Surprised.*] Mother's not going away?

GILLETTE. No, and she has put me in an awful hole.

SYLVIA. How?

GILLETTE. Oh, you wouldn't understand about business. Where the devil am I going to find fifteen thousand dollars by the day after tomorrow?

SYLVIA. I'm so sorry you're so worried.

GILLETTE. I can do with a little sympathy. She's made me feel like a yellow dog.

SYLVIA. Did Mother say something unkind to you?

GILLETTE. [*Bitterly.*] Did she? She spoke "plainly" and "hoped I wouldn't resent it." Me doing all I could so that you wouldn't be lonely. A lot of thanks I got. Told me I wasn't good enough to associate with you. [*He laughs.*] Well, if she objects to me, what's she going to say about your father and Angy Brice?

SYLVIA. Dudley! What do you mean?

GILLETTE. The minute your mother's wise, she'll get a divorce.

SYLVIA. [*Shocked.*] Divorce!

GILLETTE. Why, you poor kid, aren't you onto your father and Angy Brice? Everybody else in town is.

SYLVIA. Oh, I never thought my Daddy would go back on me.

[*Brokenhearted, she sinks into a chair, sobbing.*

GILLETTE. Your whole family has gone back on you. That selfish brother of yours has no time for anybody but his wife. Your mother leaving you alone for years at a

stretch, and your father running around with Angy Brice. A lot they care about you.

SYLVIA. Nobody wants me.

[GILLETTE, *suddenly alarmed lest* SYLVIA'S *sobs may be overheard by her mother, crosses quickly to her and quiets her.*

GILLETTE. I want you. I'm the only one that cares anything about you, and I've been ordered to say good-bye to you.

SYLVIA. [*Bewildered.*] Good-bye?

GILLETTE. Yes, you're going to be taken down to the country.

SYLVIA. I won't go.

GILLETTE. You'll have to go and you'll soon forget all about me.

SYLVIA. I won't.

GILLETTE. Oh, yes, you will.

SYLVIA. I won't.

GILLETTE. No? Then prove it.

SYLVIA. How?

GILLETTE. Come with me to Montreal tonight.

SYLVIA. Oh, Dudley!

GILLETTE. We'll be married as soon as we get there.

SYLVIA. I couldn't. They'd never forgive me.

GILLETTE. Sure they will. Didn't they forgive Alan? Forgive you! Why, they'll be on their knees to you and to me, too.

SYLVIA. I don't know what to do.

GILLETTE. Oh, all right. I might have known you wouldn't come through. You pretend to care for me. It's only a bluff. Well, stay here where nobody wants you. Good-bye.

[*He makes a pretence of leaving hurriedly.* SYLVIA *rises and runs to him.*

SYLVIA. Oh, Dudley, please don't go.

GILLETTE. Well, what are you going to do about it?

SYLVIA. [*Pathetically.*] You're sure you really want me?

GILLETTE. Of course I want you. We can't talk here. Meet me down stairs in the lounge and we will talk it over. Now you won't weaken?

[*He opens the door to the hall.* SYLVIA *crosses it to her room. He closes the door and stands for an instant smiling in triumph as he looks at the door to* NANCY'S *room, then chuckling, goes hurriedly and gets his hat and cane from the sofa, and is starting to leave the room quickly when* NANCY *enters from her room. He stops and assumes a nonchalant attitude.*

NANCY. [*Surprised.*] Oh, Mr. Gillette, where is Sylvia?

GILLETTE. I've said good-bye to her. She's gone to her room. Good night, Mrs. Fair.

NANCY. Good night.

[GILLETTE *bows smilingly and leaves the room, closing the door.* NANCY *stands thinking, then goes towards the door on her way to* SYLVIA'S *room. Her hand is on the knob when the telephone rings sharply, then again.* NANCY *answers it.*

NANCY. Hello. Put her on, please. Who? Mrs. Brice? Oh, this is *Mrs.* Fair. Yes. I'll give Mr. Fair your message. [*Enter* JEFFREY.] That was Mrs. Brice on the telephone.

JEFFREY. [*Surprised.*] Really? Why, I saw her——

NANCY. Yes, I know. She said that you had just been there, but she wants to see you tomorrow.

JEFFREY. Oh, all right. [*He goes towards his room.*] Sylvia home?

NANCY. Yes, she is in her room. Jeffrey [*He stops*], I hardly know how to say it. I understand about Mrs. Brice, but has it ever occurred to you that other people mightn't?

JEFFREY. What do you mean?

NANCY. The worst of these platonic friendships is, that people will talk.

JEFFREY. Have you heard any talk?

[*He places his overcoat and hat on a chair and goes toward* NANCY.

NANCY. Well, Bridget Wynne isn't a gossip, but even she wrote to me that you and Mrs. Brice were about a good deal together.

JEFFREY. Oh, she is still reporting to her senior officer.

[*He sits at the right of the table.* NANCY *sits at the left of it.*

NANCY. Jeffrey, frankly, do you think it courteous to go to see Mrs. Brice a few hours after my arrival?

JEFFREY. You were busy with your own affairs as usual.

NANCY. I have some pride.

JEFFREY. I don't understand.

NANCY. I was very glad to have the excuse of letters so that I need not prolong your boredom at dinner.

JEFFREY. I wasn't bored. Sorry if you were. I thought I was very entertaining. You'll have to make allowances for me. I haven't had the advantage of mingling with the mighty minds of two continents.

NANCY. Jeffrey, I'd like you to be serious.

JEFFREY. Oh, haven't we been? I think being told by your wife that you are a bore is fairly serious. Still if there's more, let's have it.

[*There is a slight pause.*

NANCY. Jeffrey, long ago we decided that if we ever came to the conclusion that our marriage had been a mistake——

JEFFREY. I haven't said so.

NANCY. Words aren't necessary. Actions sometimes——

JEFFREY. When it comes to actions, I haven't forsaken my bed and board.

NANCY. We needn't go into that.

JEFFREY. Pardon me, but that is the crux of the whole affair.

NANCY. Oh, no, Jeffrey, your attentions to Mrs. Brice are the crux of the affair.

JEFFREY. What right have you to object to anything I do?

NANCY. My right as your wife.

JEFFREY. Haven't you forfeited that right?

NANCY. How?

JEFFREY. If you prefer the public to your husband, you mustn't kick at the price you have to pay.

NANCY. Meaning that I am not to protest if you choose to make me conspicuous by your attentions to that woman? Really this is delicious.

[*She laughs, rises and goes to the desk, at which she sits.*

JEFFREY. Are you paying me the compliment of being jealous of me?

NANCY. Jealous of a man who doesn't want me!

JEFFREY. Oh, Nancy, you know damn well I want you. You may not be jealous of me, but I am of you, and of everything that concerns you. I'm jealous of your career because it takes you away from me. [*He rises.*] I tried to live up to our agreement. Haven't I the right to expect that you'd live up to it, too? If it was my job to provide the home, wasn't it your job to take care of it? Had you the right, be honest, Nancy, to go on this tour? You can't be married and be a free agent without making someone suffer. I'm so damned sick of my life, as I'm living it now—but there, I don't want to keep you if you want to be free.

[*He turns away from* NANCY, *who rises and follows him quickly.*

NANCY. I don't want to be free. [*As* JEFFREY *turns to take her in his arms, she stops him.*] Oh, wait, I want to be honest with myself and with you. I couldn't go back to my life as I lived it four years ago. It isn't that I don't want a home. While I was in France there were glorious moments and honours and flattery, but there were nights when I was so sick of the horrors, the pain, the misery, that it seemed to me if I couldn't put my head on your shoulder and cry out the loneliness of my heart against yours I couldn't go on. [JEFFREY *takes her in his arms, kisses*

her.] With death on every side I used to worry for fear you weren't taking care of yourself. They decorated me for bravery. They never knew what a corward I was about you. Why, on this tour the nights when I had had a great success and while people were crowding around me congratulating me, I'd see some wife tuck her hand through her husband's arm, just as I had tucked mine so many times through yours, and she would trot away home with her man and I would go to a lonely hotel room and think about you. Then is when I would realise that success meant nothing if I had to give up you.

[*She breaks down and cries.* JEFFREY'S *arms are about her, he murmurs her name and kisses her.*

JEFFREY. Then Nancy, I've got you again.

NANCY. Yes, and hang on to me. If I ever try to go away again, lock me up on bread and water.

JEFFREY. What about this supplementary tour?

NANCY. [*Laughing in hysterical relief.*] There "ain't going to be no tour."

JEFFREY. Fine! When did you decide that?

NANCY. Tonight. But don't ask me why.

JEFFREY. I don't care a damn why, just so you're not going.

[*He kisses her.*

NANCY. Bless you. The first thing we'll do will be to get out of this hole.

[*She moves away from him.*

JEFFREY. I don't believe Sylvia will like the country.

NANCY. She'll like it with me. She's going to have all the fun she's missed in four years crowded into as many months. It's going to be very expensive for you, darling.

[*She laughs and sits on the sofa.* JEFFREY *follows her and sits beside her.*

JEFFREY. Go as far as you like.

NANCY. She and I are going out tomorrow and buy a lot of frills. And if the exchequer runs to it I want new cur-

tains for the living-room and then I am going to give the grandest party for my two daughters!

JEFFREY. [*Pleased.*] You're going to take Peggy up?

NANCY. No, I'm going to try to make her love me, that's all.

JEFFREY. She will. After that, what? Remember, Nancy, I don't want to tie you down to the home.

NANCY. If you can have a career and do your duty to the family too, can't I? I ought to be as smart as you. But you'll help me find some welfare work to keep me and my unit out of mischief, won't you?

JEFFREY. Sure.

NANCY. That's settled. Oh, Jeff, you are a nice old thing.

[*She leans back in his arms.*

JEFFREY. Nancy, you're a darling.

NANCY. [*Teasingly.*] And you're quite sure that I am as well suited to you as Angy Brice?

JEFFREY. Oh, forget her. I discharged all my obligations to her tonight.

NANCY. I am kind of sorry for poor Angy. [*A pause.*] Obligations? What obligations? [JEFFREY *does not reply.* NANCY *draws herself away from him, looks at him.*] Has she any real claim on you? Tell me the truth. Tell me the truth.

JEFFREY. Nancy, for God's sake, be big enough to understand.

NANCY. Oh!

[*She shudders away from him, rises, goes to the mantel-piece and buries her face in her hands.*

JEFFREY. It was just after you had gone on this tour. You know how we parted. You didn't write to me. I was lonely, reckless. But I've never loved her. You won't believe it, but I've never ceased loving you.

NANCY. Stop, stop. Everything you say only makes it more horrible. [*She moves away from him across the room.* JEFFREY *rises, moves about and finally stands looking into*

the fireplace. There is silence. Then NANCY *goes towards the door to her room. She stops.*] I will go West and establish a residence. We won't drag in Mrs. Brice. Your lawyer will make all the necessary arrangements and communicate with me.

[*She turns to go.*

JEFFREY. You're going to divorce me?

NANCY. [*Turning to him.*] You don't think I'd go on living with you?

JEFFREY. Nancy, you're not going to hold me entirely to blame. You're not going to dodge your own responsibility?

NANCY. For what am I responsible?

JEFFREY. Surely you don't think my affair with Mrs. Brice was a greater sin against our love than your craving for a career?

NANCY. And surely you are not daring to place me in the same category as yourself?

JEFFREY. Why not? Do you think you can starve my affections, my passion, for years, without moral guilt?

NANCY. You must be mad to think such thoughts, and lost to all sense of decency to express them.

JEFFREY. I——

NANCY. I refuse to listen to anything more. All I want to know is, are you going to try to keep me against my will, or must I make a scandal to get free? [JEFFREY *is silent.*] Surely you don't want to blacken the name of the woman you are going to marry?

JEFFREY. I'm not going to marry her. She knows it. I'm not in love with her, nor she with me. A sum of money will console her.

NANCY. Your bargain with her has no interest for me. You may make what use of your freedom you choose. I mean to have mine.

JEFFREY. Very well. My lawyer knows the amount of my income. You may have what you wish of it.

NANCY. I wouldn't take any of it, were it not for Sylvia.

JEFFREY. What do you mean? Sylvia?

NANCY. Do you think I would allow her to remain with you? Look what your neglect has made of her. Through your carelessness Mr. Gillette has been allowed to introduce her to a sort of life until she is no more the child I sent home to you than—— Do you think when I realise that you are responsible that I would trust her to you again? Never! Never!

JEFFREY. And do you think I'm going to let you have her? She's the biggest thing in my life. I'll never let her go.

NANCY. She's the only thing in mine. If you force me to do it, I'll tell her the truth about you.

JEFFREY. So that is your threat! She is in her room, you say. Well, you tell her the truth about me and let her decide.

[*He starts toward the door to the hall.* NANCY *stands aghast.* ALAN *rushes in, followed by* PEGGY.

ALAN. Dad! Mother! Where is Sylvia?

NANCY. She is in her room.

ALAN. She is not. [*To* PEGGY.] I was right. It *was* Sylvia in that taxicab with Gillette. [*To* JEFFREY.] They drove away just as we arrived.

PEGGY. I found this letter on Sylvia's dressing-table.

[*She gives the letter to* ALAN, *who hands it to* JEFFREY.

ALAN. For you, Dad.

[JEFFREY *takes the letter. The others watch him apprehensively as he opens it.*

JEFFREY. [*Reading.*] "Dear Daddy—I——"

[*He mumbles indistinctly, then, overcome by its contents, he crumples it in his hand and drops his head in misery.* NANCY, *who has been watching him in fear, starts toward him. She is trembling and can scarcely walk. Her hands are outstretched toward the letter.*

NANCY. [*Hoarsely.*] Jeff, Jeff!

[JEFFREY *looks at* NANCY, *then hands her the letter.*

JEFFREY. Sylvia has decided. [*He rushes to the tele-*

phone.] Hello, hello, give me police headquarters quickly, quickly.

[JEFFREY *is at the telephone, frantically calling Police Headquarters.* ALAN *and* PEGGY *are beside him.* NANCY, *with the letter crushed against her breast, leans for support against the table. She stares straight ahead, her face drawn with agony, as the* CURTAIN FALLS.

THE FOURTH ACT

The scene is the same as that of the previous act. The room is in semi-darkness, the curtains drawn aside showing through the window, blurred by the drizzling rain, the lights of a building across the street. Two hours have elapsed.

NANCY *is standing at the window, peering into the street. Presently* PEGGY, *a wrap over her arm, enters from* NANCY'S *bedroom.* NANCY, *with a little cry, turns quickly at the sound of the closing door, then with a sigh of disappointment resumes her watching attitude.* PEGGY *goes to her and places the wrap about her shoulders.*

NANCY. Thank you, Peggy dear.

[PEGGY *switches on the light in the chandelier. The bell of the telephone on the writing-desk rings shrilly.* PEGGY *rushes to it.* NANCY *turns sharply and during the telephone conversation, to which she listens intently, moves down and stands behind* PEGGY.

PEGGY. [*Excitedly.*] Hello, yes. Police Headquarters. Oh, yes, Tom. Any news?—None. Oh—Gillette went to his apartment. Was Sylvia with him then?—She waited outside in the taxi. You haven't any idea where they went from there.—Your men are watching all the depots and ferries. [*She breaks down.*] Oh, Tom, you've got to find her. —No. I won't. He's there with you?—Hello, Alan. Your mother? Why——

[*Not knowing what to say, she turns to* NANCY, *who takes the telephone.* PEGGY *bows her head on the desk, crying.*

NANCY. Yes, dear, I'm all right.—Don't worry about me,

there's a good boy.—Your father? He's gone out. I don't know where.—Now, Alan, dear, you mustn't give up hope. You'll find her.—That's better.—That's more like my boy. Of course you'll bring her back to me. I know you will.—That's it. Good-bye, dear. [*She puts the telephone on the table and, smiling bravely, places her hand on* PEGGY'S *head.*] Don't cry, Peggy dear; they'll find her. They'll find her. [*Then, beginning to lose her self-control, she turns away to the window, her hands folded as though in prayer.*] Oh, God, find her. Find her. Find her.

[*She goes to the window and, leaning against it, her face pressed against the panes, breaks into long shivering sobs.* PEGGY *goes to her and, putting her arms about her, leads her to the fireplace and places her in the couch where* NANCY *sits, holding out her hands to the blaze.* PEGGY *kneels beside her. There is a pause, then* NANCY *looks at the clock on the mantel.*

NANCY. It's almost twelve o'clock.

PEGGY. We'll hear some good news very soon, now. [*Rising.*] Wouldn't you like a cup of tea? [NANCY *shakes her head.*] Not if I sent for the things and made it myself? I make very nice tea?

NANCY. I'm sure you do. But I couldn't.

[*There's a pause.*

PEGGY. Oh, Mrs. Fair! I wouldn't keep on reading that letter.

NANCY. Oh, Peggy, I know it by heart. "I'm in everybody's way. Nobody wants me. Dudley does, so I'm going with him. . . . Sylvia." Oh, my baby!

[*She breaks down again.*

PEGGY. Please don't cry—please!

NANCY. No, I mustn't. I mustn't. [*A slight pause.*] Oh, if I could only do something!

PEGGY. There is nothing to do but wait.

[*She sits on the arm of the couch, her arms around* NANCY. *Again there is a pause.*

NANCY. [*Wildly.*] Oh, Peggy, tell me again that they'll find her!

PEGGY. Of course they will. Now, Mrs. Fair, you mustn't. Please don't cry.

NANCY. [*Controlling herself.*] Why are you so good to me?

PEGGY. [*Very tenderly.*] Because you're Alan's mother. And because you're you.

NANCY. I don't deserve this, my dear, but I'm very grateful.

PEGGY. I've been wanting to do this ever since that day we hurt you so cruelly.

[NANCY *pulls* PEGGY'S *head down to her and kisses her.* PEGGY *sits beside* NANCY *and, taking* NANCY'S *hand in hers, strokes it affectionately. There is a pause. Both of them are lost in thought.*

PEGGY. The one thing I can't understand is Sylvia's leaving her father. She would never have gone if she hadn't felt that in some way he had turned against her. She might have left——

[*She stops abruptly.*

NANCY. You could understand her leaving me. I'm beginning to understand that, too. I'm beginning to see that he has more right to her than I have.

PEGGY. Oh, I don't mean that she doesn't love you, but the love Sylvia had for her father was wonderful.

NANCY. He had earned it.

PEGGY. I don't think Mr. Fair realised it, but he didn't want her to love anyone more than she did him.

NANCY. This is going to be terrible for Jeffrey. [*A pause.*] It's strange, Peggy, how one can seem to be doing one's duty and fail so miserably—go so hopelessly wrong. [*A pause, then* NANCY *looks toward the telephone.*] Queer they don't telephone. I wonder where Jeffrey is? If they don't find Sylvia——

PEGGY. Oh, they will, they will.

NANCY. [*Rising.*] Oh, what is her father going to do without her?

PEGGY. Thank God, you're here. At least, whatever happens, he has you.

[NANCY *winces and turns away as the door opens to admit* JEFFREY, *tired, haggard. Both the women turn to him inquiringly. He shakes his head. Then places his hat and coat on the chair beside the door.* PEGGY *goes to him.*

JEFFREY. Any news?

PEGGY. [*Cheerfully.*] Not yet. But there will be very soon.

JEFFREY. You all right, Nancy?

NANCY. Yes, Jeffrey.

JEFFREY. Did Alan telephone?

PEGGY. Yes, just a moment ago.

JEFFREY. No trace of them?

[PEGGY *shakes her head.* JEFFREY *moves slowly down to the chair at the desk, where he sits, brooding.* PEGGY *sits in the armchair at the table. A pause.*

JEFFREY. [*Savagely.*] Curse the day the swine came into my house!

NANCY. Oh, Jeff, don't make me feel my responsibility for it all any more than I do. I can't bear it. I can't bear it.

JEFFREY. I'm so sorry, Nancy.

NANCY. That's all right, Jeff.

[NANCY *goes to the window and looks down into the street, shading her eyes with her hands to cut off the light from the chandelier. Presently she rubs the moisture off the pane and peers out again. Then she lifts the sash and leans out, looking down into the street. Suddenly she gives a little start.*

NANCY. Jeff! Here comes a taxi!

[JEFFREY *and* PEGGY *run to the window and look out over* NANCY'S *shoulder.*

PEGGY. [*Excitedly.*] Is it stopping?

NANCY. No, it's going on.

[PEGGY *and* JEFFREY *return to their chairs;* NANCY *remains at the window. A pause, then* JEFFREY *takes out his watch.*

PEGGY. [*Whispering.*] What time is it?

JEFFREY. [*Whispering.*] A quarter past twelve.

[PEGGY, *sighing, sinks back into the chair, and after a moment* JEFFREY *turns and looks at* NANCY.

JEFFREY. Mother, you'd better come away from that window; there is a draught. You'll take cold. [NANCY *does not reply.*] Nancy, you'll take cold. [NANCY *does not answer. Another pause. Then* JEFFREY, *rising, goes to* PEGGY, *touches her quietly on the shoulder.*] Peggy, get her away from that window. I can't stand it. I can't stand it.

[*Profoundly moved, he walks over to the sofa and sits.* PEGGY *goes to* NANCY *and touches her on the shoulder.*

NANCY. Yes, dear?

PEGGY. I wouldn't watch for them, dear.

NANCY. No?

PEGGY. You know a watched kettle never boils. [NANCY *smiles, but remains at the window.* PEGGY *returns to the arm-chair and stands behind it.*] Is it raining now, Mr. Fair?

JEFFREY. Yes.

NANCY. [*Quite unemotionally.*] I hope Sylvia hadn't on thin shoes. She takes cold so easily. At least, she used to.

[JEFFREY *buries his face in his hands.* PEGGY'S *lips quiver. Her eyes fill with tears. They wait.*

JEFFREY. Nancy, did Gillette owe you any money?

NANCY. [*Intently watching the street.*] Yes, several thousand.

JEFFREY. That's it!

NANCY. [*Indifferently.*] What do you mean?

JEFFREY. I found out from Tom Gibbs tonight that Gil-

lette was the man who was mixed up in that Bazaar scandal. He has stolen your money or was going to.

NANCY. I don't understand.

JEFFREY. Don't you see you can't prosecute him now without bringing Sylvia into it? . . . Damn him!

[*It all seems of little moment to* NANCY, *and she turns again to the window. The door to the hall opens very softly and* ALAN *stands in the doorway, unseen by* JEFFREY *and* NANCY. PEGGY, *moving to sit in the chair, sees* ALAN *and goes quietly to him. He whispers to her and she darts out and across the hall into* SYLVIA'S *room. He comes in quickly, closing the door. At the sound* NANCY *and* JEFFREY *turn.* JEFFREY *springs to his feet.*

NANCY. [*With a great cry.*] Alan!

ALAN. She's here.

JEFFREY. Thank God!

[NANCY *makes a rush for the door.*

ALAN. [*Stopping her.*] Wait, mother. What are you going to say to her? What are you going to do?

NANCY. Oh, Alan, what would I do?

ALAN. I didn't know.

JEFFREY. Where did you find her?

ALAN. At 125th Street station. They were on their way to Montreal.

JEFFREY. Where is he?

ALAN. I've taken care of him. He's——

NANCY. [*Hysterically, and trying to pass* ALAN.] What does it matter where he is? All that matters is that she's here. Don't shut her outside. Alan, do you hear me? Let me go to her!

JEFFREY. Easy, Nancy, easy.

ALAN. [*Taking her in his arms.*] All right, mother, all right. But be careful—treat her very gently.

[*He goes.*

NANCY. Jeffrey, I'm giving up my claims to her. She's yours. So be kind to her.

[SYLVIA *enters, white-faced, defiant, followed by* PEGGY *and* ALAN. NANCY *rushes toward her to embrace her.* SYLVIA, *stretching out her hands, stops her.* NANCY, *surprised, stunned for the moment, looks toward* JEFFREY *bewilderedly.*

NANCY. Jeff——

[JEFFREY *looks at* SYLVIA, *who looks coldly at him.*

NANCY. Won't you sit down, dear?

SYLVIA. I can take what everybody has to say, standing.

NANCY. [*Very tenderly.*] Darling, don't be afraid.

SYLVIA. I'm not afraid.

NANCY. We're not going to scold you. We're not going to say anything.

SYLVIA. No? Well, I am.

JEFFREY. [*Sternly.*] Very well. Go on. I'm interested to hear what *you* have to say.

NANCY. [*Turning to him.*] Jeff, please.

JEFFREY. I'll handle this, Nancy. Alan, take Peggy into your mother's room.

SYLVIA. She needn't go. She's in on this.

PEGGY. I?

SYLVIA. You were responsible for our arrest, weren't you?

ALAN. You weren't arrested.

SYLVIA. We would have been if you hadn't been there.

PEGGY. No, no, dear. Tom would have brought you here to us.

SYLVIA. Oh, then, you did arrange it all? Don't you think, for a new member of this family, you were taking a good deal on yourself to——

JEFFREY. Come, come, Sylvia; it was I who got Tom Gibbs on the wire. You should be very grateful to Peggy and her brother. God knows we are.

SYLVIA. [*Turning upon him.*] I'm not. What right has she—what right have any of you—to butt in on my affairs?

NANCY. Why, my dear, we all love you.

SYLVIA. You acted like it, didn't you? What have you all got against Dudley?

ALAN. Sylvia, I've told you that he was an embezzler, and that his only idea in marrying you was to use you to prevent mother prosecuting him.

SYLVIA. That's what you say. Mother, has Dudley taken any money from you?

NANCY. No.

SYLVIA. Well, Alan, mother ought to know.

ALAN. He confessed that he was short in his accounts.

SYLVIA. I didn't hear him.

ALAN. You weren't there when he was begging Gibbs to let him go.

SYLVIA. No. I was being made conspicuous, seated on a bench on the platform between two officers. Oh, I'll never forget it!

[*She puts her hands to her face as though to shut out the memory. Momentarily her spirit is broken.*

NANCY. [*Whispering.*] Jeff, go to her now.

JEFFREY. [*Going to* SYLVIA.] I am sorry, dear, that all this had to happen—that you feel we've all conspired to disgrace you. But we were only trying to protect you.

SYLVIA. Protect me? If you wanted to protect me, why wait? You knew that I was going about with him.

NANCY. But, Sylvia, dear, your father didn't realise the sort of friends that Mr. Gillette had—introduced——

SYLVIA. He introduced me to the only friends he had. What do you know about them? You never met them.

JEFFREY. Sylvia, I forbid you to use that tone to your mother.

NANCY. Sylvia is right, Jeff. I judged them solely by what she told me of them.

SYLVIA. And while you were judging you passed sentence on Dudley, too, didn't you? You forbade my best friend seeing me again.

JEFFREY. Your mother had every right to do that.

SYLVIA. She had no right to make him feel that he wasn't fit to associate with me, when it was she who introduced him to me.

JEFFREY. She did not know that you were *associating* with him so intimately.

SYLVIA. No. She wasn't here, was she?

NANCY. No, Sylvia, I wasn't here.

JEFFREY. But I was. I'm to blame. I should have watched over you.

SYLVIA. But you didn't care what I was doing, where I was going, just so you were free to run around with Mrs. Brice.

[JEFFREY *flinches as though he had been struck.*

NANCY. Sylvia, how dare you talk like that to your father?

ALAN. Haven't you any respect? Haven't you any feeling? Can't you see that you are hurting father and mother cruelly?

SYLVIA. Well, haven't they hurt me?

ALAN. [*Indignantly.*] Hurt you! You ought to be down on your knees, thanking them for saving you from a marriage——

SYLVIA. Were you worrying about how cruelly you hurt mother when you told her about Peggy? Would you have been on your knees thanking them if they had tried to save you from marrying her?

JEFFREY. Stop, Sylvia. How can you? If it hadn't been for Peggy——

SYLVIA. I wouldn't have had to stand all this.

ALAN. You don't think it's pleasant for us, do you?

SYLVIA. There's an easy way of stopping it.

JEFFREY. How?

SYLVIA. [*Hysterically.*] Let me get out of here.

[*She makes a rush for the door.* ALAN *stops her.*

JEFFREY. Where do you want to go?

SYLVIA. [*Jerking herself away from* ALAN.] Anywhere away from all of you! Why am I dragged back here, where nobody loves me, wants me?

[*She throws herself in the arm-chair at the table, sobbing wildly.*

NANCY. Your father loves you, wants you.

SYLVIA. A lot he loves me! He loves Angy Brice.

ALAN. Who told you this damn lie?

SYLVIA. [*Sobbing.*] It's not a lie. Everybody has known but us, that he was going to get rid of mother and marry Angy.

ALAN. Dad—my God!—this isn't true?

SYLVIA. [*Rising.*] It is true. Mother, aren't you going to leave Daddy?

[*There is a pause.* SYLVIA, ALAN *and* PEGGY *are waiting for the answer.* JEFFREY *stands with bowed head.*

NANCY. No.

JEFFREY. [*Turning, makes an effort to speak, and finally articulates.*] Nancy!

[*Then, overcome, he turns away to the window.*

SYLVIA. [*Going to* NANCY.] Why, Dudley said—— That's why I went away with him. I didn't know what would become of me when you separated. I thought my Daddy had gone back on me.

[NANCY *folds her in her arms, kissing her.* JEFFREY *comes to them.*

JEFFREY. Your daddy will never go back on you, if you will only——

NANCY. Jeff, don't make conditions; we've both been wrong. We must be content with whatever Sylvia wants.

SYLVIA. I only want you all to want me.

NANCY. Oh, my dear! my dear!

PEGGY. [*Snivelling.*] Alan, where is Gillette?

ALAN. In an ambulance.

[*He smiles and shows his clenched fist.*

THE END

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